School experiences of children with ADHD in New Zealand

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Acknowledgements.

Thanks needs to go to everyone who helped me achieve my goal of completing this thesis. It has been a long journey, and at times a frustrating one. I could not have completed this project without the help of some special people.

The thesis is a result of my passion for understanding, supporting and advocating for children with ADHD. I wanted to have an insight into what children understood as being important in regard to their experience of school, and also what their parents understood as important to their child's experience of school. I was able to explore this thanks to the four children and the six parent participants, I am thankful and humbled that I was able to hear their experiences, they were insightful and eye-opening. My own understanding of what children with ADHD experience at school has greatly increased, and my own teaching practice has changed due to the process of completing this thesis. I will endeavour to continue doing my best to promote the inclusion of children with ADHD.

I am especially thankful to my two supervisors: Dr Trish McMenamin and Dr Kerry Vincent. Thank you for your continuous support, feedback and constant encouragement throughout the thesis writing. I could not have been more fortunate to have these two supervisors, I learned a great deal from them and felt like they really cared about my own personally development throughout this process. Thank you. I would also like to thank my grandmother, mother and father. They were was the inspiration for undertaking this research. Growing up as a child with ADHD was not always easy, their passion for inclusion and unrelenting belief in me and love made me into the teacher that I am today. I hope that this research helps others to see what my grandmother and parents saw in me, that ADHD does not define a child.

Abstract

In this research, I explored the school experiences of four New Zealand primary school children diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and the perceptions their respective parent(s) held of their child's experience of school. The study was conducted using an interpretative phenomenological qualitative research approach utilising in-depth interviews.

Three themes: experiences of exclusion, positive and negative narratives of school, and ineffective structures of support, emerged from the data collected from this research. The themes showed that most of the children and their respective parent(s) had similar school experiences. A main conclusion from the research is that the children experienced exclusion at school and that they did not receive adequate support to participate at school fully. The children in this research also gave insights into how they wanted to experience school. These children wanted friendships at school and to be included. They also wanted the opportunity to use their interests to make school more interesting and engaging. Parents criticised some of the key supports available to children with ADHD in New Zealand, notably the Individual Education Plan (IEP). The findings of this research suggest that we should listen to the voices of children with ADHD more, as they have valuable and surprising insight into their schooling experiences.

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List of Acronyms

ADHD: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

CRPD: United Nations Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

IEP: Individual Education Plan

PALs: Perth A Loneliness Scale

PB4L: Positive Behaviour for Learning

PIB: Positive Illusory Bias

PRU: Pupil Referral Unit

RTLB: Resource Teacher Learning and Behaviour

SEBD: Social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties

SEG: Special Education Grant

SENCO: Special Needs Co-ordinator

UNCRC: United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children

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Chapter 1: Introduction

"Individuals with ADHD are not abnormal, disordered, or dysfunctional, they are hunters existing in a farmer's world" (Hartmann, 2016, p.13).

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a disorder that affects children and adults. It has been observed since 1902 and was initially described as "an abnormal defect of moral control in children" (Barkley & Murphy, 2011, p. 34). Since 1902 the disorder has gone through many name changes, and our understanding of what effects the disorder has on individuals has also changed. It is now claimed to be the most treatable psychiatric disorder that currently exists (Barkley & Murphy, 2011; Brown, 2008). However, it is also considered by some as the most widely misunderstood psychiatric disorder (Barkley & Murphy, 2011; Brown, 2008). There are a multitude of reasons for which ADHD is misunderstood, including the trivialisation of ADHD in the media, the misunderstanding of ADHD symptoms as immaturity, and the belief that the disorder does not exist (Barkley & Murphy, 2011; Brown, 2008).

One of the most poorly suited environments for a child with ADHD has been described as the classroom environment (Prosser, 2008). A classroom provides all the elements a child with ADHD struggles with: having to sit and listen for sustained periods, delayed gratification, self-control, self-motivation, planning, filtering out distractions and retaining large amounts of information (Barkley & Murphy, 2011; Kendall, 2016; Prosser, 2008). Given that the classroom environment demands these things, it can be assumed that any child with ADHD would find spending six hours a day in such an environment difficult. So, what do children with ADHD think of school, and what do parents of children with ADHD think of their child's experience of school? These two questions set the scene for the current research. In the following sections, I provide a background on the current research, a brief background of ADHD, a brief background

of schooling provision for children with ADHD in New Zealand and a rationale for the current research.

Purpose of Research

In this study, I explored the perspectives of four children diagnosed with ADHD and their parents' perspectives regarding their schooling experiences. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative, interpretive phenomenological study was to explore the lived school experiences and perceptions of children with ADHD, as well as the experiences and perceptions of their parents, as expressed through their own voices. Children in this research is understood as being within the age range of five to twelve years old. This research was designed to gather data that explores the most important aspects of school from the perspectives of the children and parents in the research.

Research Questions

Qualitative research questions need to articulate what a researcher wants to know about the perspectives of those involved in the research (Agee, 2009). Going into this research, I knew I wanted to know how the participating children with ADHD, as well as their parents, made sense of their school experiences. My two research questions were:

- What were the children's experiences of school?
- What were the parents' perceptions of their children's experiences of school?

What is ADHD?

ADHD is one of the most commonly occurring neurological disorders among school-aged children worldwide, affecting approximately 3–5% of child populations (Guderjahn et al., 2013; Walker-Noack et al., 2013). However, considering its relatively high occurrence rate and a

wealth of research surrounding the disorder, it is also misunderstood and highly trivialised (Barkley & Murphy, 2011) to the extent that some researchers even deny its existence (Saul, 2015). However, ADHD does exist; it is clinically recognised as a neurological condition by the 5th edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), which identifies three distinct subtypes of the disorder. These subtypes are the predominantly inattentive type (ADHD-PI), predominantly hyperactive-impulsive type (ADHD-PH), and the most commonly occurring, combined type (ADHD-C) for those with both inattentive and hyperactive/impulsive symptoms (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). As of 2011, the disorder has been recognised as a spectrum disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Barkley & Murphy, 2011).

The three core symptoms of ADHD are inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). It is widely accepted that these three core symptoms manifest themselves as impairments of executive functioning (Barkley & Murphy, 2011; Brown, 2008; Coghill et al., 2013; Elosúa et al., 2017). The following six processes are considered aspects of an individual's executive functioning that are impaired by ADHD (Brown, 2008; Barkley & Murphy, 2011): Organisation and planning of tasks; the ability to concentrate on a given task without paying attention to other irrelevant tasks; being able to sustain continued effort on a task; making sense of emotions and responding to others in emotionally appropriate ways; retaining information and being able to transfer knowledge from working memory to short or long-term memory; controlling one's actions, another term for which is impulse control.

Over the past two decades, an increasing number of children have been diagnosed with ADHD worldwide (Barkley, 2018). The increasing prevalence of ADHD in child populations worldwide has led to an ever-increasing research repository focused on the disorder. The

research conducted in educational contexts has been primarily focused on interventions that address the disorder's core symptoms (Barkley, 2018). In the limited research on child and parent perceptions of ADHD schooling experiences, the common findings are that children with ADHD specifically have difficulties creating and maintaining friendships and making academic achievements at school, and struggle in traditional classroom environments (Gibbs et al., 2016; Barfield & Driessnack, 2018; Kendall, 2016; Padilla-Petry et al., 2018; DuPaul & Stoner, 2016; Prosser, 2008).

Schooling Provision for Children with ADHD in New Zealand

In the New Zealand context, ADHD has been referred to by the Ministry of Health (2001) as a "major public health problem of childhood". Concerning the education of children with ADHD, official information in an online resource based around causes, symptoms and teaching strategies for educators was released by the Ministry of Education in 2015. Prior to this, there were no official documents or guidelines focused on the education of children with ADHD in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2015).

Regarding the schooling for students with ADHD, New Zealand aims to have a fully-inclusive education system (Higgins et al., 2007). As such, there is no separate provision for students with ADHD. Students with ADHD are taught in mainstream classrooms. Except for the relatively few online ADHD resources, there is no specific support, funding or guidance given to schools for ADHD. However, schools have access to a Special Education Grant (SEG) to use for students with special educational needs as they see fit. A further resource available to all schools is the Resource Teachers Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) service. Students can be referred to

the service by their school and the RTLB service can then provide specialist teaching advice and support to schools (Mitchell, 2014).

Given that children with ADHD in New Zealand are educated in mainstream schools, and that New Zealand schools aim to be inclusive schools, it is relevant to define inclusion and exclusion. Defining inclusion in a school context can be difficult due to its broad interpretations. However, Göransson and Nilholm (2014) analysed different definitions of inclusion. They found that, broadly, inclusion is not just the placement of a child in a regular school. It is concerned with a child fully participating in a school community's social and academic life. Part of this social participation is a child's right to feel a sense of belonging and community, which assumes children are accepted by their peers (Ainscow et al., 2006). Therefore, exclusion can be understood as when children cannot fully participate in their school's academic or social life of their school. Booth (1996) also provides insight that inclusion is the process of removing barriers to participation in centres of learning. Participation in centres of learning also means social participation, such as friendships and being able to enjoy play opportunities at school.

Rationale for the study

Education research often does not involve actively seeking children's views and voices (Harcourt & Einarsdóttir, 2011; Kellet, 2010). There is an issue with this. Educational research most directly affects children because they are most impacted by teacher practice, education research, and education policy (Bourke & MacDonald, 2018). New Zealand is not immune to the underrepresentation of child's voices in research. Bourke and MacDonald (2018) argued that in New Zealand education research, children's views are still underrepresented. This is important because Article 12 of the United Nation Convention on the Rights of Children (UNCRC) asserts that children have the right to have their voices heard and for these voices to be taken seriously

(The United Nations, 1989). Furthermore, Article 7 of United Nations Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) asserts that children with disabilities have a right to have their voices heard on matters that affect them, one of which is schooling (United Nations, 2006). New Zealand is a signatory of both the UNCRC and the UNCRPD. These commitments New Zealand has made are intended to improve schooling for all children. However, to improve schooling for all children, the views of children need to be listened to and acted on, and it is imperative for education researchers to consider children's views to understand their lived experiences of schooling (Lundy, 2007).

There is some New Zealand research on children's voices regarding their school experiences (Conder et al., 2016; Higgins et al., 2007; Robertson & Taylor, 2007; Robertson, 2017). However, there are currently no New Zealand studies that focus on the voices of children with ADHD regarding their schooling experiences or the voices of parents of children with ADHD. Given that Bourke and MacDonald (2018) argue that the voices of children in New Zealand education research are underrepresented, New Zealand's commitment to the UNCRC and UNCRPD and New Zealand's commitment to creating an inclusive education system (Mitchell, 2014), it is concerning that there are no New Zealand studies focused on the voices of children with ADHD. These children make up approximately 3–5% of New Zealand children in schools (Ministry of Education, 2015). The current research is not aimed at exploring how inclusive schools in New Zealand are toward students with ADHD. In this research, I aim to understand the lived experiences of schooling for children with ADHD and their parents. However, as Gibbs et al. (2016) pointed out, understanding the lived world of children with ADHD provides opportunities to provide improved support and adaptions to schooling, thus giving schools the opportunity to become more inclusive for students with ADHD. Given the

high prevalence of ADHD, the importance of including children's voices in education research, the fact that New Zealand is committed to an inclusive education system and the gap of studies on either children with ADHD or parents of children with ADHD and their perceptions of school experience, this study is a worthwhile undertaking.

Researcher's interest in the Topic

My interest in the area of ADHD and finding the voices of children who have the condition stems from my own experiences. I was first diagnosed with ADHD at the age of five and diagnosed again at the age of 22 with combined type ADHD. I have spent a great deal of time trying to understand how the disorder positively and negatively affects me. Part of my own process of acceptance and understanding surrounding this condition and coming to terms with its implications in my life has been reflecting on my childhood, especially parts of my childhood that were unpleasant and during which I had feelings of exclusion and confusion. I believe ADHD has stigmatised me and been to my disadvantage at times in my life, especially during my childhood, not due to my symptoms but due to how others perceived the disorder. In New Zealand, I have been an active advocate for children and adults with ADHD. I set up a not-for-profit support group, *ADHD Matters*, to educate the parents of children with ADHD and have been involved in education conference presentations focusing on inclusion in which I have spoken about my experience with ADHD and the problems facing New Zealand schools as they work to include children with ADHD.

I spent two years teaching in London at a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), a special school for students excluded from mainstream schooling due to their severe challenging behaviour. Many of the children who attended this unit had a formal diagnosis of ADHD, which fits with the statistic that in the United Kingdom (UK), 39% of children with an ADHD diagnosis have had

fixed-term exclusions from school, and 11% of children with an ADHD diagnosis have been permanently excluded from schooling, resulting in movements to PRUs (UK ADHD Partnership, 2018). The students I met at this school made me realise how misunderstood ADHD was. Often, these children were made to feel guilty for aspects of their personality that reflected ADHD. I felt there was blame and guilt passed onto students instead of understanding. This inspired me to learn more about the condition and the children struggling with it. I currently work as a Special Educational Needs Specialist at an International School. My specialty is working with children with ADHD between the ages of 5 and 12. This research is something I feel passionately about; ADHD is a significant part of my life.

Organisation of Thesis

This thesis is composed of five chapters. In this chapter, Chapter One, I introduced the thesis. Both the background of ADHD and the researcher's background and interest in the area are provided. The research questions are also introduced.

In Chapter Two, I review existing research on the schooling experiences of children with ADHD and the perceptions of this experience among parents of children with ADHD. This chapter contains a discussion of the importance of research involving children's voices and highlights gaps in the research.

In Chapter Three, I describe how the research was conducted. A description of qualitive research and the features of interviewing are discussed along with the design of my student. I then discuss the ethical considerations, including the ethical approval, recruitment, consent, data collection and data analysis processes.

In Chapter Four, using thematic analysis I highlight the key themes found from the four child interviews and the four parent interviews.

In Chapter Five, I discuss the research findings. This chapter contains a discussion of peer rejection the children faced at school, negative and positive aspects of the classroom environment, and ineffective support at school. In this chapter, I also discuss the limitations, opportunities for further research and conclusion of the research.

Summary of Introduction Chapter

In this chapter I have introduced the purpose of this research, which is to gain the perspectives of children diagnosed with ADHD on their experiences of school, and the perspective of their respective parent(s). A brief background of ADHD, a background of provision for children with ADHD in New Zealand has been provided, and a rationale for why this research was conducted as well as the researcher's interest in the topic. The research questions have been introduced, as well as an overview of the organisation of this thesis. The next chapter comprises be a literature review focusing on current research examining children's voice in education research, the perspectives of schooling of children with ADHD as regards their children's schooling experiences.

Chapter Two: Literature review

This chapter begins by briefly discussing the importance of gaining children's voices in education research and current New Zealand education policy affecting children with ADHD. Next, research focusing on children with ADHD and their experience of school will be discussed. The final section focuses on the parents of children with ADHD and their perceptions of their child's school experience. A summary will then be presented. The research on ADHD is extensive and covers many areas. It is the most well researched neurological disorder affecting children (DuPaul & Stoner, 2016). In terms of research specific to children's views of their own experience of school, however, studies are limited (Wiener & Daniels, 2016).

Child Voice in Education Research

Studying children's voices has become an increasing focus in education research over the last two decades, largely due to the UNCRC, conceived in 1989 and committed to by 196 nations since 2008 (Can & Göksenin, 2017). Article 12 of the UNCRC relates to the right of a child to assert his or her views, express those views, and for those views to have weight in matters that affect the child (Lundy, 2007). Research suggests that in education, however, even if the child's voice is heard, it is often not given weight or acted on (Lundy, 2007).

There are a number of issues that need to be considered when researching children's voices. The most pertinent is that there is always a range of voices, never just one, which presents the challenge of which voices to seek and how to gather them (Fielding, 2009). Regarding the voices of children with ADHD, which is the focus of this research, Prosser (2008) argued that as a group, children with ADHD are underrepresented. He asserted that if children

with ADHD are to be included in schooling, instead of merely being integrated into it, then their voices need to be consulted and acted upon in school settings.

There is a lack of studies that explore the perspectives of children with ADHD on issues that affect them (Prosser, 2008). However, there is research that has focused on the voices of adolescents with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD), which often includes children with ADHD (Cefai & Cooper, 2010). Cefai and Cooper (2010) conducted a literature review of five qualitative studies all focused on eliciting the voices of secondary-school adolescents with SEBD. Five themes ran throughout all five studies: poor relationships with teachers, victimisation, a sense of powerlessness, disengagement at school and exclusion. The five studies suggested that the children involved in the studies overwhelmingly felt mistreated and misunderstood by their peers and teachers. They also felt that they had no voice in their experience of school, or if they had the opportunity to voice their opinions, they were disregarded. However, a barrier to gaining authentic children's perspectives across the five studies was shown to be that the adolescents in the studies often felt that school staff belittled them, making them less willing to share their views at school.

Flynn (2014) focused on the school experiences of 20 adolescents with SEBD in Ireland. In-depth interviews were conducted over four months, followed by a student-led group discussion with teachers and the school principal. This group discussion resulted in a number of student-led strategies and interventions to promote positive change in the adolescents' experiences of school, such as chill-out cards, which children could use if they needed to leave the classroom. An important finding of Flynn's (2014) research was that the adolescents described the process of having their voices listened to and acted on within the group discussions as both significant for them and an opportunity to promote positive change.

The views of the adolescents revealed in the in-depth interviews were significant. For example, the adolescents indicated that they perceived the professionals working with them had negative perceptions of them and that the adolescents had a longing to belong and have positive peer relationships. A theme reflected in all the interviews was that the adolescents felt misunderstood by teachers and their communities. They all felt excluded to varying degrees at school. Flynn (2014) argued that listening to the adolescents provided an opportunity for transformative pedagogical and attitudinal changes, which could benefit adolescents in similar circumstances. Flynn (2014) concluded that to develop more inclusive learning environments, children's voices need to be listened to in schools because children are the experts of their realities.

The same argument has been made by Padilla-Petry et al. (2018), whose research on the school experiences of adolescents with ADHD showed that successfully including adolescents with ADHD in schooling requires their voices to be heard and acted on. For example, a finding from Padilla-Petry et al.'s (2018) research was that in the eyes of the adolescents, teachers being made aware of their ADHD diagnosis actually negatively impacted their relationships with their teachers, and in their view, made them the target of teacher blaming for negative classroom behaviours and reduced the perceived support available to them in the classroom. This finding was significant and a result of the researchers' focus on trying to elicit the perspectives of the adolescents because it identified a potential stigma and lack of understanding of ADHD on the part of teachers. The research discussed above suggests that children with SEBD often have negative relationships with their teachers (Cefai & Cooper, 2010; Flynn, 2014; Padilla-Petry et al., 2018). Also, children with SEBD often feel they do not have a voice, or that if they do, their voice is not valued or acted on (Cefai & Cooper, 2010; Flynn, 2014). It has been argued that

understanding the perspectives of children is important because giving children a voice can help make schools more inclusive by providing them with an understanding of the challenges children face at school and what aspects of their education they perceive as positive or negative (Prosser, 2008; Padilla-Petry et al., 2018). I was unable to find any studies that elicit the views of children with ADHD in New Zealand focused on their experiences of schooling. The current research was intended to address this gap.

Current New Zealand Education Policy Affecting ADHD

Schools in New Zealand are required to be inclusive under the Education Act 1989, which obligates schools to educate children in the school's student catchment zone (Powell, 2012). The right to inclusive education is enshrined in the *UNCRPD* and the *UNCRC* (UNCROC) and reinforced by the *New Zealand Disability Strategy* (NZDS) (Powell, 2012; Mitchell, 2014). Both the UNCRPD and the UNCROC are commitments that New Zealand has made.

Since 2000, New Zealand has been on a journey to achieve a world-class inclusive education system (Powell, 2012). Part of this journey was an initiative for inclusion: *Success for All-Every School, Every Child*, which sets out, "the government's four-year plan of action to achieve a fully-inclusive education system" (Ministry of Education, 2010). The finer details of what inclusion looks like are largely left to the discretion of the schools. More recently, the New Zealand Ministry of Education released the *MoE Learning Support Action Plan 2019–2025*. The key goal of the plan is to enable New Zealand to meet its obligations under the UNCRPD. The action plan sets out six priorities, including providing flexible support to children with disabilities, improving education for groups of children at risk of disengagement at school and increasing access to supports for children (Ministry of Education, 2019). As noted in Chapter

One, schools have access to a pool of money known as the SEG, which they can use as they see fit for children with disabilities. Schools also have access to RTLB, which provides specialised teaching assistance for children (Mitchell, 2014). Schools are also able to sign up for a behaviour programme called Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L), which has been shown to have a positive effect on children who present challenging behaviour (Powell, 2012).

New Zealand, however, does not have a fully-inclusive education system as of yet. Its inclusion policy and practice are still argued to be "underpinned by focusing on deficits of children, instead of an approach focused on reducing barriers to participation" (MacArthur & Rutherford, 2016, p. 160). A recent report in New Zealand written by the Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce (2018) was critical of New Zealand's approach to addressing the needs of all children. The author of the report found that the gap between the best-performing and worst-performing children in New Zealand schools has widened and that bullying is widespread in many school communities. Of concern to this research, the report also revealed that support for some students with disabilities is virtually non-existent and that in some schools, some children with disabilities and their parents are made to feel unwelcome when seeking enrolment.

In New Zealand there are no statutory guidelines for educating children with special educational needs (Hornby, 2014). While the Ministry of Education can create guidelines for teaching children with special educational needs, such as those with ADHD, it is not mandatory for schools to follow such guidelines. Furthermore, schools are not required to have a special-needs coordinator (SENCO) because schools in New Zealand are largely autonomous. Schools are also not required to give students with special educational needs Individual Education Plans (IEPs), even though the Ministry of Education has created extensive guidelines for them (Hornby & Witte, 2010). Furthermore, it has been previously found that IEPs in New Zealand can have

unrealistic goals, usually due to stakeholders not thinking about what resources are realistically available for children in schools (Hamilton & Vermeren, 2016; Wylie, 2000).

Children's experience of school

In the international context, there are many studies related to children with ADHD in schooling. These studies focus on areas such as child–teacher relationships, impairment in peer relationships and academic performance. Many studies explore children's views of certain elements related to ADHD, such as medication and peer relationships. However, there is a lack of studies on the overall school experience of children with ADHD (Padilla-Petry et al., 2018). Because there is such an extensive repository of studies on ADHD in general, the studies discussed in this section were chosen based on their relevance to the research questions set out in Chapter One and their relevance to the school context. Also, research on either children (aged 5–12) or adolescents (ages 13–18) was chosen. The studies are discussed in relation to the following themes: teacher–student relationships, wanting a sense of normality, peer rejection, loneliness, the positive illusory bias and struggles in the classroom.

Teacher-Student Relationships

Research suggests that children with ADHD often feel misunderstood by their teachers (Shatell et al., 2008; Kendall, 2016). Studies focusing on children with ADHD and their experiences of school have revealed that children often feel that teachers have negative perceptions of them. Research by Rushton et al. (2019) focused on the school engagement of children with ADHD, which the researchers noted to be an under-researched area. The research was a large-scale longitudinal study with 498 grade one participants in Australia who took part in surveys focusing on their engagement at school. The children's parents and teachers were also surveyed, and follow-up surveys were conducted 36 months later. The research revealed a

significant relationship between the severity of ADHD symptoms and the lack of engagement at school; the more severe the child's ADHD symptoms were the larger the disengagement at school was. A significant finding was that student–teacher conflict was a leading cause of the children's lack of school engagement. Relationships between teachers and children were often so strained for most of the 489 students that teachers implementing ADHD interventions would experience significant issues in effectively implementing the interventions. The researchers concluded that additional attention needs to be paid to teacher–student relationships for children with ADHD because teachers play a crucial role in promoting school engagement for children with this diagnosis.

Kendall (2016) conducted in-depth interviews focusing on the self-perceived difficulties children with ADHD face in school. The research centred on the relationships the children in the research had with their teachers. Empathy and understanding from teachers were two key themes that were important to the children. The research revealed that all the children had a feeling that they were somehow different from other children and that this difference was not always viewed positively by teachers. Instead, children reported feeling mistreated by teachers whom the children felt did not understand them. Descriptions of frequently being yelled at by teachers seeking their compliance were highlighted in the research as a common element of the participants' relationships with their teachers.

The research suggests that children with ADHD often perceive teachers as not understanding the perceived lack of control that some children feel they have over their ADHD symptomatic behaviours. These behaviours include disruptive behaviour in class, difficulties staying focused and difficulties staying organised (Hallberg et al., 2010; Kendall, 2016). In their study on children's and parents' perceptions of ADHD in a schooling context, Gibbs et al. (2016)

found that a lack of teacher understanding of ADHD was a negative experience for the children. However, children in their research described that when the teachers established firm boundaries, followed through with consequences and helped with their schoolwork and organisation, they were viewed positively. Arguably, actions like these showed the teacher's understanding of ADHD. A similar theme emerged in Kendall's (2016) research: children wanted teachers who understood, helped and respected them. Gibbs et al. (2016), Kendall (2016) and Rushton et al.'s (2019) research suggests that teacher relationships and being understood by teachers are of significance to the school experiences of children with ADHD

Wanting a sense of normalcy

Normalcy is a recurring theme in research on the school experiences of children with ADHD. Normalcy is understood as fitting in with peer groups and at school in general (Hallberg et al., 2010). Padilla-Petry et al. (2018) conducted one of the few studies on the perspectives of children with ADHD about their school experiences. The participants of the study stated that feeling normal was a constant struggle and that they desired to be like their peers at school but often felt different, stigmatised and alienated.

Jones and Hesse (2014) found that nine adolescents with ADHD focused on wanting to feel normal when describing their school experiences. The adolescents felt different from their peers. Their perception was that they lacked the social skills required to make and maintain friendships. While some of the adolescents understood that their ADHD could explain their social difficulties, others saw their difficulties as belonging to a narrative of lifelong exclusion due to their personality. Most of the adolescents expressed a desire to be more accepted by their peers and have a greater understanding of social situations. However, they feared that this was not something that would occur for them, even in the future.

In a study similar to that of Jones and Hesse (2014), Hallberg et al. (2010) examined 10 children's daily experiences of ADHD. They pointed to the children wanting to be accepted by their peers and wanting to feel normal at school. The children all stated that they disliked their disorder and felt they had to hide it from others to fit in. Lynch and Lodge (2002) previously researched how children with emotional and behavioural disabilities, such as ADHD, can be made to feel as if their challenges are not normal or acceptable. They found that these children are often compared to children who are understood by teachers and wider school communities to be normal and do not present undesirable behaviours. The researchers refer to this phenomenon as the lens of normality. The lens of normality can cause children with emotional or behavioural difficulties, such as ADHD, to develop negative self-perceptions because they learn to compare themselves to the idea they are given of what is normal and often find that they do not fit into this idea of normal, which can cause feelings of inadequacy and low confidence.

Further evidence of the negative self-perception that children with ADHD can develop when given ideas of what is considered normal is provided by Shatell et al. (2008). They focused on 16 college-aged participants with ADHD and their recollections of their schooling experiences as children. They found that the participants' recollections were based on comparisons of themselves to peers who they considered normal growing up. Looking back on their school experiences, the participants recalled that their younger selves struggled to fit in and were generally misunderstood by their peers and teachers.

All of the studies discussed above (Jones & Hesse, 2014; Hallberg et al., 2010; Shatell et al., 2008) suggest that children with ADHD are given an idea of what is considered normal. Building on Lynch and Lodge's (2002) lens of normality, Holt (2004) argued that at school, children with disabilities are explicitly given an idea of what is considered to be normal from

teachers and peers, such as normal behaviour and normal academic ability, which in turn, causes low self-perceptions among children with disabilities.

Peer rejection

Research suggests that children with ADHD are more frequently rejected by their peers than typically-developing children (Hoza et al.,2005; Mrug et al., 2007, 2012). Hoza et al. (2005) conducted research on the extent of peer rejection children with ADHD experience compared to typically-developing children. The children involved in the study completed a sociometric assessment based on nominated friendships. Unlike their typically-developing peers, children with ADHD tended to nominate friends who did not reciprocate the friendship nomination. The researchers concluded that the study showed that children with ADHD have a higher rate of peer rejection at school when compared to typically-developing children and are often viewed negatively by their peers.

The high rate of peer rejection identified by Hoza et al. (2005) has been found in similar research focusing on peer rejection and utilising sociometric assessments (Mrug, Molina, Hoza, Gerdes, Hinshaw, Hechtman & Arnold, 2012; Mrug, Hoza, Pelham, Gnagy & Greiner, 2007). However, Farmer and Farmer (1996) pointed out that a limitation in sociometric assessments in measuring peer rejection is that they fail to take children's complex social environments into account, limiting the technique's ability to produce accurate information about peer rejection. Gibbs et al. (2016) also suggested that studies examining peer rejection and peer relationship difficulties for children with ADHD can be unreliable. They suggest that gathering reliable data on the subject is difficult because researchers usually rely on children's self-perceived difficulties with peer relationships without considering the lack of self-awareness that younger children have of their own social realities (Gibbs et al., 2016).

Normand et al. (2011) highlighted the extent of peer rejection experienced by children with ADHD compared to their typically-developing peers. The research involved 87 children with ADHD and 46 typically-developing children and surveys about friendships and play behaviours. The research also included observations of the children in play situations and parent and teacher surveys. A significant finding of the research was that the children with ADHD experienced far more peer rejection than the comparison children. This was also reflected in the teacher and parent surveys. A significant contributing factor to the peer rejection that the children with ADHD in the research experienced was understood by the researchers to be their play behaviours. Compared to the typically-developing comparison children, the 87 children with ADHD were much more likely to mismanage rules in games, perform illegitimate game actions, want control of games and not understand the rules of games.

Ronk et al. (2011), built on the suggestion that children with ADHD struggle in play situations. They examined a phenomenon described as peer-group entry, and the difficulties children with ADHD face in the process. Dodge et al. (1983) first described how children make friends by joining different peer groups. Children first engage in low-risk behaviours, such as talking about similar interests or expressing interest in the same game. High-risk behaviours are defined as behaviours that may alienate members from the group, such as irrelevant conversations or trying to control the game. In Ronk et al.'s (2011) study, 26 children with ADHD and 26 typically-developing children were compared concerning their ability to engage in the process of peer-group entry. Ninety-eight boys were also recruited to act as hosts for the social situations required in the study. A key finding was that boys with ADHD attempted peer-group entry at the same rate as other children. However, they used twice as many high-risk entry strategies, such as yelling or talking about irrelevant subject topics. They were not as effective at

peer-group entry as others. The researchers concluded that the children showed a diminished knowledge of the social norms required to effectively enter into peer groups, which in turn, leads to high rates of peer rejection for children with ADHD.

Capodieci, Rivetti and Cornoldi (2016) conducted research on school interventions to improve the social skills of children with ADHD symptoms and decrease peer rejection. The research involved 30 children with ADHD in 12 different schools with teachers using cooperative learning strategies with the 30 children. The research revealed that children with ADHD are much more likely to be rejected by peers in unstructured, unpredictable environments than in structured, predictable ones. The researchers noted the importance of schools understanding that structured environments enable children with ADHD to practice their social skills in a safe, predictable environment with teacher support, compared to unstructured times outside of class, such as playtimes.

The research surrounding the experiences of peer rejection among children with ADHD strongly suggests that these children experience frequent and persistent peer rejection (Hoza et al., 2005; Mrug et al., 2007; 2012; Normand et al., 2011). Participating in free play activities, such as playtimes, is also suggested to be an issue for children with ADHD. Research suggests children with ADHD struggle with the knowledge and application of social skills necessary for free play (Ronk et al., 2011; Normand et al., 2011). However, children with ADHD experience less peer rejection in environments and activities that are structured and in which adult support is available (Capodieci et al., 2016).

Loneliness

Despite the suggestion in the research that children with ADHD experience significant peer rejection (Hoza et al., 2005; Mrug et al., 2007; 2012), self-reported loneliness has been

found to be no more significant for children with ADHD than their typically-developing peers (Houghton et al., 2015; Heiman, 2005, Elmose & Lasgaard, 2017). Houghton et al. (2015) conducted research on children with ADHD, their feelings toward friendships at school and their self-reported feelings of loneliness. The researchers used the Perth A-Loneliness scale (PALs), which contains 24 questions about loneliness. The scale was used with 84 children diagnosed with ADHD, and 84 typically-developing children were used as a comparison group. The children with ADHD identified more negative features of their friendships and experienced more peer rejection than the others. However, the loneliness scale between the two groups showed no significant difference. The fact that children with ADHD did not report higher levels of loneliness than their typically-developing peers was viewed positively. However, the reasons for this, given their self-reported high levels of peer rejection, are unknown. The researchers concluded that there is a lack of studies on loneliness among children with ADHD.

Heiman (2005) found that children with ADHD rate themselves as being no lonelier than children without ADHD, despite experiencing significantly higher rates of peer rejection. Similarly, Elmose and Lasgaard (2017) conducted research in a special education setting, comparing the feelings of loneliness among children diagnosed with ADHD and their typically-developing peers in mainstream education. Twenty-five children in special education were compared to 199 typically-developing children in mainstream school. The findings were similar to those of Houghton et al. (2015) and Heiman (2005); children with ADHD were found to experience similar levels of loneliness as their typically-developing peers. However, Elmose and Lasgaard's (2017) research being based in a special education setting is not reflective of the context in which the vast majority of children worldwide receive their education, that is, in mainstream schooling (Mitchell, 2010). However, it is significant that across mainstream and

special school settings, the finding that children with ADHD experience similar levels of loneliness as their typically-developing peers was consistent (Houghton et al., 2015; Heiman, 2005; Elmose & Lasgaard, 2017).

Although the researchers discussed above (Houghton et al., 2015; Heiman, 2005; Elmose & Lasgaard, 2017) claim that children with ADHD do not report higher levels of loneliness than their typically-developing peers, there is an inherent limitation in these studies. The limitation is that all the studies mentioned use Likert-type scales and questionnaires as their data collection methods. Although the children rated themselves as no lonelier than typically-developing peers, the use of questionnaires and scales result in limited perceptions and responses (Elmose & Lasgaard, 2017; Houghton et al., 2015). The children's overall school experiences were not a focus in these studies. Therefore, it would be difficult to conclude with absolute certainty that children with ADHD are no lonelier than their typically-developing peers. Additional in-depth research on children's holistic schooling experiences with ADHD is needed to determine how children with ADHD experience loneliness.

Positive Illusory Bias

Positive illusory bias (PIB) is a phenomenon specific to children with ADHD and their self-perceptions. It has been described by Hoza et al. (2002) as a phenomenon where children with ADHD frequently overestimate their performance in academic and social domains when compared to objective measures of their performance or teacher and parent ratings of their performance (Hoza et al., 2002). Research focusing on the PIB has repeatedly yielded the same result, that children with ADHD frequently overestimate their performance in academic and social domains (Hoza et al., 2002; Owens et al.,2007; Capodieci, Crisci & Mamarella, 2018).

There is debate within the literature as to the cause of the PIB. This debate has ranged from children having developmental delays, causing a lack of awareness of their own competence (Milich, 1994), to children simply being unaware of their lack of competence (Hoza et al., 2002). It has been argued that the effect functions as a self-protection mechanism (Ohan & Johnston, 2002). The self-protection hypothesis is that children with ADHD hide their incompetence when faced with difficult tasks, which increases their sense of self-worth and self-competence, and prevents feelings of incompetence (Capodieci et al., 2018). The research evidence for the self-protection hypothesis as a cause of PIB is stronger than that for any other hypothesis (Capodieci et al., 2018; Hoza et al., 2002; Ohan & Johnston, 2002).

Hoza et al. (2002) conducted research on the self-perception of abilities of 195 boys with ADHD. Self-perceptions were focused on the following domains: academic ability, friendships and self-regulation. These boys' surveys were compared to 73 typically-developing children's self-perception surveys and teacher surveys of the boys. The most significant finding of the study was that the boys with ADHD, compared to the typically developing boys, rated themselves highly in all domains. Hoza et al. (2004) replicated these findings. They found that children with ADHD are more likely than their typically-developing peers to overestimate their competence at school in social and academic domains. In both studies, the researchers concluded that PIB exists for children with ADHD when rating their competence in social and academic domains (Hoza et al., 2002; Hoza et al., 2004).

Capodieci et al. (2018) found that children with ADHD show a PIB when self-reporting loneliness at school when their reports of loneliness were compared to those of their typically-developing peers. The researchers argued that the reason for which the PIB effect occurred was that it served a self-protective function. The children with ADHD in the research tended to be

rejected by their peers to a substantially greater extent than their typically-developing counterparts. However, the children with ADHD reported similar levels of loneliness as the typically-developing children. Ohan and Johnston (2002) found that children with ADHD have a social self-protective PIB, which helps prevent feelings of self-isolation and loneliness.

The research discussed above suggests that children with ADHD demonstrate PIB when estimating their abilities in social and academic domains at school (Capodieci et al., 2018; Hoza et al., 2002; Ohan & Johnston, 2002). However, there are limitations in studies on PIB. Such studies rely on the self-reports of children with ADHD and typically-developing children. While self-reports can be unreliable, what is more troubling is that none of the studies had criteria for what qualifies as a typically-developing child. Furthermore, only the research by Hoza et al. (2004) included female participants, and no attention was paid to the 3 ADHD subtypes in any of the studies discussed, which makes generalising from the studies difficult.

Struggles in the Classroom

There is a lack of research on what children with ADHD perceive as challenging at school. Difficultly exists in gaining the voice of children with ADHD regarding their struggles at school, which is largely because young children lack a high degree of self-awareness (McMenamy & Perrin, 2008). However, some research has been conducted on the self-perceived difficulties adolescents with ADHD face at school. The research suggests that adolescents with ADHD self-perceive concentration and focusing as difficulties at school (Kendall, 2016; Padilla-Petry et al., 2018; Prosser, 2008). Padilla-Petry et al. (2018) found that one of the struggles that many of the ten participants in their research described was concentrating in a classroom environment because they found themselves being constantly distracted and felt restless, which

they perceived to be out of their control. Kendall's (2016) research yielded similar findings—that adolescents perceive distractions at school as constant and persistent.

Junod et al. (2006) conducted research that focused on the struggles experienced in the classroom of 92 children with ADHD and 63 typically-developing children. Their research was based on classroom observations. The research found that children with ADHD experienced significantly higher disengagement levels in classroom tasks than their typically-developing peers. The researchers noted that children were distracted by various types of off-task behaviour, such as talking to peers, focusing on something irrelevant and not being able to focus on what was being taught in class.

Prosser (2008) researched the effectiveness of traditional Australian schooling pedagogy in relation to educating and including adolescent students with ADHD. Participants reported feelings of disengagement with school, struggles with distractions and difficulties making academic achievements at school. Prosser (2008) argued that schools do not understand adolescents with ADHD and that adolescents with ADHD struggle with understanding what is expected of them in a school environment.

Research suggests that the use of the outdoors and using children's interests at school are helps children with ADHD in the classroom environment . Kuo and Taylor (2004; 2009) researched the effects of utilising break times in green spaces, such as parks and outdoor school spaces, with children with ADHD in the school day. They found that utilising green spaces led to less ADHD-related symptoms, such as trouble focusing and impulsive behaviour, compared to when breaks in greenspaces were not used. Concerning the use of interests at school, Smith et al. (2019) found that using interests in the teaching of children with ADHD is a more effective motivator than using interests for children without ADHD in their research on 162 children with

ADHD and 140 typically-developing children. Hughes and Cooper (2007) also found that children with ADHD are more engaged in the classroom when their interests are used in their learning.

The research discussed above suggests that for adolescents with ADHD, significant struggles in the classroom include distractions and troubles focusing in school (Kendall, 2016; Padilla-Petry et al., 2018), which was similarly found to be the case for children (Junod et al., 2006). However, using the outdoors as part of learning for children with ADHD is suggested to help them manage their symptoms (Kuo & Taylor, 2004; 2009). Furthermore, utilising children's interests at school is suggested to be an effective way to motivate children with ADHD (Smith et al., 2019; Huges & Cooper, 2007).

Parents' Perspectives on Children's experience of School

While there is a gap in the New Zealand literature regarding parental perspectives of the school experiences of children with ADHD, in the international context there are some studies on the parents of children with ADHD and their perspectives of their children's school experience (Mclyntyre & Hennessy, 2012; Travel & Visser, 2006; Dosreis et al., 2010). The research suggests that parents perceive that their children struggle both academically and socially at school and that the existing support for their child is inadequate (Mclyntyre & Hennessy, 2012; Travel & Visser, 2006; Dosreis et al., 2010). Research also suggests that parents perceive schools and teachers as lacking in their understanding of ADHD (Carpenter & Austin, 2008; Efron et al., 2008). The literature suggests that the lack of understanding schools and teachers have of ADHD causes parent–teacher relationships to be strained. In the following sections, the research is discussed under the following themes: peer rejection, support at school for children with ADHD, lack of understanding and knowledge of ADHD, struggles at school and teacher understanding.

Peer rejection

There is research that suggests that the parents of children with ADHD perceive their children's experiences of school to include frequent and persistent peer rejection and that peer rejection is often one of the foremost concerns of parents regarding their children's school experience (Mclntyre & Hennessy, 2012; Gibbs et al., 2016; Hoza et al., 2005). Bagwell et al. (2001) conducted a longitudinal study focused on the parents of children with ADHD and their understandings of their children's experiences of peer rejection in primary and secondary school. A key finding was that most parents in the research perceived that their child experienced frequent peer rejection throughout primary and secondary school and had very few reciprocated friendships throughout primary school.

Research suggests that the parents of children with ADHD believe that their children's peer rejection is partly caused by an impairment of social skills (Aduen et al., 2018; Mclntyre & Hennessey, 2012). Aduen et al. (2018) conducted research that focused on whether children with ADHD had difficulties acquiring or using age-appropriate social skills. The parents in the research perceived that their children could acquire age-appropriate social skills. However, most parents in the research believed that their children could not regularly perform age-appropriate social skills, which parents understood to be a major cause of peer rejection. Mclntyre and Hennessey (2012) similarly found that the parents of children with ADHD in their research understood that situations at school that require social skills are difficult for their children. Most parents of children with ADHD involved in Mclntyre's and Hennessey's (2012) study described their children as having a limited grasp of social skills and that when their children applied this limited knowledge of social skills in situations such as playtimes, it led to peer rejection. However, Mikami and Normand (2015) found that studies of children being rejected due to a

lack of social skills have limitations because they often do not specify what exact elements of social skills cause peer rejection for children with ADHD.

Research also suggests that parents understand teachers', peers', and other parents' views of children with ADHD to be a cause of peer rejection for children with ADHD (Dosreis et al., 2010; Carpenter & Austin, 2008; Mclntyre & Hennessey, 2012; Normand, 2011). Research conducted by Normand (2011) found that parents of children with ADHD believed that peer rejection was caused by the negative views that typically-developing peers' parents held of the children with ADHD. Normand (2011) argued that the negative perceptions that the parents of peers held of the children with ADHD in the research meant that the children with ADHD were less likely to be invited to playdates and activities outside of school gatherings, such as birthday parties. The finding that the parents of children with ADHD believe their child faces peer rejection due to the negative views other parents and peers have of their children has been replicated in similar research (Dosreis et al., 2010; Mclntyre & Hennessey, 2012; Sibley et al., 2010).

Support at school for children with ADHD

It is suggested that often the parents of children with ADHD view the support available for their children at school, such as teacher-aide hours, specific academic and social interventions and the IEP, as inadequate (Mclntyre & Hennessy, 2012; Gibbs et al., 2016; Efron et al., 2008; Carpenter & Austin, 2008). Efron et al. (2008) administered 66 questionnaires to parents of children with ADHD, focusing on the support their child received at school. The research revealed that most parents in the study were dissatisfied with the support their children received at school and that most of the parents felt that their children needed additional practical in-class support to thrive at school, such as teacher-aide hours and social skills teaching. The

supports mentioned as being in place for their children, such as IEPs and behaviour logs, were largely considered to be ineffective by the parents. Significantly, the majority of questionnaires indicated that parents believed their children's teachers' understanding of ADHD was inaccurate and that the majority of parents thought this lack of understanding meant their children's teachers did not know how to support their children at school. However, the research relied on questionnaires, which prevented any follow-up information from being gathered about each parent's situation.

An in-depth study of parent perceptions of support at school was conducted by Gibbs et al. (2016). Their case study of 6 parents of children with ADHD revealed that the parents often felt confused and dissatisfied with the support their children received at school. Parents felt that their children's schools did not clarify what supports were or were not available to their children. Furthermore, parents often felt that their concerns regarding the lack of support at school were ignored. Parents also felt that their children's schools did not communicate regularly about their children's progress and often ignored social issues, such as peer rejection. Mclntyre and Hennessy (2012) similarly found that the parents of children with ADHD in their research felt that the process of acquiring any support for their children at school was stressful, complicated, confusing and inadequate. Parents in the study described having a child with ADHD as a stressful journey and that a lack of any form of support from the school contributed to this stress.

Research suggests that negative relationships between home and school is an issue that makes supporting children with ADHD at school difficult (Carpenter & Austin, 2008; Gwernan-Jones et al., 2015). It has been suggested that the parents of children with ADHD often feel criticised and blamed by their children's schools for the negative behaviours displayed by their children at school (Carpenter & Austin, 2008; Gwernan-Jones et al., 2015). Furthermore, it is

common for the parent–teacher relationships of children with ADHD to be strained (Gwernan-Jones et al., 2015). Carpenter and Austin (2008) found that for the parents of children with ADHD in their research, conflict with schools often arose due to parents attempting to advocate for support for their children. However, the schools and teachers, in turn, found parents to be difficult to deal with (Carpenter & Austin, 2008). It has also been reported that the parents of children with ADHD feel less welcomed, supported and involved in their children's schools than the parents of typically-developing children (Marton et al., 2009).

Labelling can be considered to be a form of support for children with ADHD in a school context because it can help to build understanding of the disorder (DosReis et al., 2010). However, it must also be acknowledged that the labelling of children with special educational needs is a controversial issue in education (Graham, 2012; DosReis et al., 2010). Although labels can assist children with disabilities by creating awareness of the challenges they may face, they are also argued to limit what children with disabilities are understood as being capable of and can lead to peer bullying (Lauchlan & Boyle, 2007).

Dosreis et al. (2010) interviewed 48 parents of children with ADHD about whether they felt their children's ADHD labels were stigmatising. The research revealed that the parents in the research perceived that both themselves and their children were socially isolated after receiving the ADHD diagnosis. The parents of other children were perceived to have a stigma toward ADHD and to not want their children to socialise with children diagnosed with ADHD. However, it was interesting that the parents in the research described how having a label of ADHD enabled their child to receive treatment through stimulant medication, and allowed for greater understanding amongst their children's teachers, both of which far outweighed the disadvantages of stigmas in their view. Ohan et al. (2013) similarly found that although the

parents of children with ADHD in their research experienced stigma from an ADHD label, the validation, support, access to treatments and understanding shown by teachers and other professionals, such as doctors, outweighed any stigma.

In terms of potential benefits that labels can provide for children with ADHD, Wienen et al. (2019) reported that the 30 primary school teachers in their study believed that the ADHD label was highly beneficial. The teachers shared the view that having a label helped to provide context for helping specific children who otherwise may underachieve due to a lack of understanding of their challenges. Also, the teachers understood ADHD labels to be a way of creating effective working relationships with the parents of children with ADHD because a shared understanding of the challenges children with ADHD face could develop.

Lack of understanding of ADHD

International research suggests that parents of children with ADHD perceive that teachers and schools demonstrate a lack of understanding of ADHD (Mclntyre & Hennessy, 2012; Carpenter & Austin, 2008; Efron et al., 2008; Harborne, Wolpert & Clare, 2004; Travell & Visser, 2006). Mclntyre and Hennessy (2012) reported that the parents of children with ADHD in their study found convincing teachers that ADHD was a real disorder and not just bad behaviour was a challenge. Similarly, Marton et al. (2009) found that the teachers of children with ADHD often associated negative behaviours, such as trouble focusing or difficulties focusing in class, with bad parenting rather than the symptoms of ADHD.

There is limited investigation into teacher understandings of ADHD in the New Zealand context. The one related piece of research that does exist is a comparison study of teacher preferences of school interventions for ADHD conducted by Curtis et al. (2014), who compared New Zealand teachers to teachers in the United States. The research revealed that New Zealand

teachers had fundamental misconceptions of the disorder and, compared to teachers in the United States, the New Zealand teachers showed a lack of awareness of interventions that could be used with children with ADHD. Also, 96% of the New Zealand teachers in the research desired to participate in some form of ADHD training to consolidate their knowledge of the disorder. However, no such training existed in New Zealand.

In the international context, there is research focused on teacher understanding of ADHD. Guerra et al. (2017) surveyed 173 primary school teachers from the United States on their knowledge of ADHD. The surveys revealed that teachers' knowledge of the condition beyond its three core symptoms was lacking. Teachers were likely to make general statements that they believed applied to all children with ADHD. In reality, the symptoms of the disorder vary among individuals. Similarly, Moore et al. (2017) found that educators in the UK lack understanding of what children with ADHD struggle with and how to help them at school. Honkasilta et al. (2014) found that the parents of children with ADHD in their research reported wanting additional control over their children's education because they distrusted the teachers' knowledge of ADHD and their attitudes toward the disorder and their child, and were concerned that the lack of understanding among teachers would affect their children's wellbeing.

Concerning building an understanding of ADHD for teachers, Corkum et al. (2005) found that a 10-week course programme on the understanding of ADHD and behaviour strategies which was attended by both the parents and teachers of the children with ADHS had significant benefits in terms of teacher understandings of ADHD. The sessions were short, basic and based on reducing ADHD behaviours in school and home settings. Follow-up interviews with teachers revealed that attending the course gave the teachers new strategies to use for children with ADHD and increased the overall understanding of ADHD, which led to a decrease of ADHD-

related behaviours in their classrooms. Oord and Tripp (2020) similarly found that combined teacher–parent education focusing on ADHD effectively reduces ADHD behaviour in the classroom and improves both parents' and teachers' understandings of ADHD as a disorder.

Struggles at School

Research on parent perceptions of the struggles children with ADHD experience at school mostly revolve around matters related to academic impairment (Barnard-Brak et al., 2013), involvement at school (Rogers et al., 2009), social impairment (Gibbs, Mercer & Carrington, 2016) and interventions used at school (Travell & Visser, 2006; Bussing et al., 2012).

Travell and Visser (2006) conducted interviews pertaining to the school experiences of 17 children and their parents. A significant finding was that the parents of the children with ADHD felt that teachers did not listen to them and often disregarded their concerns surrounding their children's struggles at school, which centred around academic and social impairments. Based on interviews with nine parents of children with ADHD, Harborne et al. (2004) similarly found that the parents often felt that teachers did not listen to their concerns about their children's lack of progress at school, which they believed was due to a lack of assistance with their child's struggles. The research also revealed that the parents in the study thought that teachers believed that ADHD was a result of inconsistent parenting rather than a serious disorder.

Barnard-Brak et al. (2013) researched parent perceptions of the academic achievements and attainments of children diagnosed with ADHD. The researchers conducted a Likert-type scale survey of 235 parents of children with ADHD. The vast majority of parents in the research reported that their child struggled with academic achievement, and most indicated that ADHD

was understood as the cause of their child's lack of academic achievement. However, although the study's findings have value, one limitation is that only surveys were used. No contextual information surrounding the children was discussed, which may also be a factor that impacts academic achievement.

Gibbs et al. (2016) conducted case studies of the parents of children with ADHD and revealed that although the parents were concerned with academic attainment, social struggles were understood to be more severe and more of a cause for concern than academic attainment. Parents wanted school interventions to be focused on minimising their children's perceived social-skill deficits. Bussing et al. (2012) conducted a survey of 569 children with ADHD and their teachers, parents and health professionals working with the children and found that the parents were the most likely group to want interventions for their child, ranging from medication and counselling to academic and social support. The researchers argued that parents were the most likely group to believe that interventions would help their children with the challenges they face at school and at home.

There is evidence that because of the academic and social challenges children with ADHD face at school, the parents of children with ADHD are often more involved in some elements of their children's schooling than the parents of typically-developing peers. By analysing questionnaires from 1,600 parents of children with ADHD and 11,923 parents of typically-developing children in the United States, Montes and Montes (2020) found that the parents of children with ADHD were more likely than parents of typically developing children to spend time helping with homework, teaching their child social and time-management skills and spend much time investing in communicating with their child's school concerning behaviour and academic performance, but less time on class trips or sporting activities. Similarly, Howard et al.

(2016) found that the parents of children with ADHD were more likely to invest time in helping with academic and social issues than the parents of typically-developing children

Chapter Summary

In this chapter. I outlined the importance of listening to children's voices in education research and briefly described the education policy affecting children with ADHD in New Zealand's primary schools. The research surrounding children with ADHD and their perspectives of schooling, as well as the perspectives of their parents, was the main focus of the chapter.

The research discussed in this review suggested that children with ADHD go through school experiencing frequent peer rejection, having teachers who do not understand their struggles and struggling to succeed in a classroom full of distractions. For parents, a lack of support was suggested to cause stress and frustration because they felt that ADHD was not taken seriously as a disorder. It was apparent from this review that there is a lack of research giving young children with ADHD a voice and no research in New Zealand that does this. In the next chapter, I describe the current research's method and methodology.

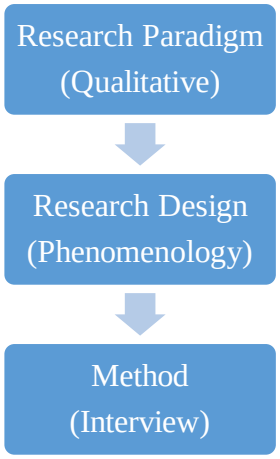
Chapter Three: Methodology

This study is grounded in qualitative research. Guiding my decisions around my methodology were my two research questions:

- What were the children's own experiences of school?
- What were the parents' perceptions of their child's experience of school?

In this chapter, I will describe how this study was conducted. The chapter begins with a discussion of the characteristics of qualitative research, the research design, followed by the sample of my study, the data collection method, the process of data analysis, the validity and reliability of my study, and finally ethical considerations. Figure 1 shows an overview of my research plan.

Figure 1: Research Plan



Qualitative Research

Cohen et al. (2007) assert that qualitative research is underpinned by the belief that the world in which humans live and derive meaning from is socially constructed. Similarly, Creswell (2009) and Bogdan and Biklen (2007) assert that the qualitative researcher understands there to be no single universal truth because the social underpinnings of the world make this impossible. With this in mind, qualitative research is an approach to research with attempts to understand the meanings of social occurrences from research participants' perspectives (Litchman, 2010). My research explored how children and their respective parent(s) felt about their experience of school.

There was no universal truth to be discovered from the research; instead, the focus was on the meaning participants made of their school experiences. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) and Merriam and Grenier (2019) understand qualitative research to be an appropriate choice for research in a naturalistic setting, such as a school. Furthermore, in research where the data collected is descriptive, such as words, where there is no hypothesis to prove or disprove, and where understanding research participants' individual experiences is valued, qualitative research is appropriate. Creswell (2009, 2012) also asserts that qualitative research is useful when a flexible research approach is valued, as qualitative research does not have a predetermined structure.

Creswell (2009) suggests that qualitative research should be used if “the study is exploratory, not much has been written about the topic or population being studied, and the researcher seeks to establish the meaning of a phenomenon from the views of participants” (p. 4). The current research meets all these criteria. It focuses on children's and parents' experiences

of school in New Zealand. There has been little written on this topic. The purpose of the research is to gain meaning from the phenomenon from the participants' perspectives.

Theoretical Perspectives

There are several research paradigms used by researchers in education. Guba and Lincoln (2005) define a research paradigm as: “A world view that defines, for its holder, the nature of the world, the individual's place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts” (p. 193). A research paradigm can also be understood as a set of fundamental beliefs that influence how meaning intends to be constructed from the research's data. Therefore, a researcher must understand the paradigm in which their research is located (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Qualitative research is often associated with the interpretivism paradigm, which understands that reality is subjective and constructed by individuals (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). My research is located within the interpretivist paradigm. Interpretive studies are those which focus on experiences of individuals and the world in which they live (Creswell, 2009). This is directly related to my research, which is focused on the experiences and perspectives of four children with ADHD and their parents.

Research Design

This study was based on a phenomenological research approach. Using this approach, I focused on the lived reality of children’s school experiences and their parents’ perceptions of these experiences. Phenomenology can be referred to as either a philosophy or a research method (Dowling, 2007). Either way, phenomenology focuses on the lived experience of individuals.

A phenomenological research approach allows the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the ‘lived experience’ of participants (Patton, 2015, p. 116). In this research, I

attempted to identify 'the essence and the underlying structure of a phenomenon' (Merriam, 2009, p. 23). Using a phenomenological approach, my study examined what was important to the children and parents, and what they wanted others to know about the school experience.

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) and Patton (2015) point out that phenomenological researchers must separate their personal attitudes and beliefs in regard to the interpretation of the phenomenon in question in a process called bracketing. However, the purpose of bracketing is not to altogether remove the researcher's emotional response to the phenomenon. Instead, "emotions show what is important to pay attention to and emotions lead to the origins of interpretation" (Drew, 2004, p. 219). With this in mind, phenomenological research incorporates not only "the meaning of the phenomenon for the participants but the researcher's own responses" (Donalek, 2004, p. 517).

I choose phenomenology so that I would be able to describe the experiences children had of school and their parents' perceptions. While I was planning my research, I asked myself, 'How did the children perceive their experience of school?' I did not intend to assume what the answer to this question was. My focus was on understanding how children and parents would interpret their experience of school. Phenomenology attempts to understand all aspects of phenomena instead of focusing on one specific concept (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Participants

I recruited six parents and four children from an urban area in one geographical location in New Zealand. Purposeful sampling was used for the selection of participants. Patton (2002, p. 230) summarises the benefit of using purposeful sampling: "The logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of

the inquiry, thus the term purposeful sampling".

I used a purposeful sample to ensure I could recruit child participants in the 7-12 age range with an ADHD diagnosis. Ideally, the sample would have been from a random population completely unknown to the researcher. However, the sample was a convenience, or judgement, sample, which allowed parents and children who met the research criteria to be recruited. Gall et al. (1996) assert that although a random population sample is desirable for research, it is better to conduct a study with a sample that suits its purpose rather than do no research at all. Furthermore, although convenience sampling makes it difficult to draw generalising conclusions about a population (Johnson & Christensen, 2007), the purpose of this research was not to draw generalising conclusions but to conduct a qualitative interpretive study that was exploratory.

Parents were selected based on the criteria that they had a child with an ADHD diagnosis and that their child was between the ages of 7 and 12. Also, they had to reside in the geographical location where the study was taking place, and the child had to attend a mainstream primary school. Recruitment took place through a 30 strong member group called *ADHD Matters*, a service the researcher had established one year prior to provide free education around ADHD for the parents of children with this diagnosis. Other than attending group sessions once monthly at varying frequencies, the researcher did not know the parents of the group and did not have their personal contact details, other than an email address which had been used to organise the timings and locations of the group sessions.

A total of four families took part in this research: four children and six parents (see Table 1) The participants were given pseudonyms for their anonymity.

Table 1: The research participants

Family	Child	Age

Claire and Ian	Frank	8
Betty	Owen	11
Jack and Claire	Francis	9
Francis	Lily	8

To avoid potential identification of participants no information of what geographical location, school or other identifying features are discussed in this research.

Research Method

Data for a phenomenological study is able to be collected in a number of ways, such as interviews, and observations. I choose to use in-depth opened-ended interviews for my method. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) assert that: “In focusing the interview on the experienced meanings of the subject’s life world, phenomenology has been relevant for clarifying the mode of understanding in a qualitative research interview" (p. 26).

I had to ensure that there was alignment between my research paradigm (qualitative), and my research design (phenomenology). My choice of using interviews was influenced by my research design. Generally, qualitative interviews allow researchers to understand the participants’ world, and unfold the meaning of participants’ experiences (Bogdan and Biklen, 2006).

Data Collection

There are a number of ways information can be gathered for research. Each choice has strengths and weaknesses, and it is up to the researcher's judgement to make a choice of best fit (Creswell, 2012). The interview is a valuable research method for perceiving and comprehending

others' thoughts and views (Creswell, 2012). Semi-structured interviews are those where some questions are prepared before the interview, and during the interview, the researcher can probe to gain more in-depth information (Hinds, 2000). Semi-structured interviews are advantageous when many open-ended questions are asked to gather the participants' thoughts and opinions (Adams, 2015).

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) describe the semi-structured interview process as one where the interviewer has the "freedom to alter and add questions or rearrange the items depending upon the nature of responses the interviewer is getting" (p. 4). This freedom regarding questioning was essential to my research as I had to adapt based on participants' responses. The open-ended questions allowed me to follow up on the themes that the children and parents talked about most and understood as important to their experience of school. Individual in-depth semi-structured interviews were, therefore, an appropriate choice.

All the interviews were conducted at the participants' homes, where I felt the participants would feel most comfortable. Furthermore, I wanted to ensure children were being interviewed in a place that was both safe and familiar to them. This meant that I was a guest in their environment and not the other way around. To ensure that children and parents were not prompted to answer questions on unexpected topics, I sent the topics to be discussed two weeks in advance for every interview. In the parent information sheet (Appendix D), I offered to explain any topics in more detail over the telephone if desired, but I did not receive any requests. The topics that were discussed were designed to explore the participants' experiences and perspectives of schooling. However, the participants were not limited in terms of specific questions; the topics were to help guide the discussion.

1. What aspects of schooling do children find enjoyable and difficult at school? What aspects do their parents think their child enjoys, and what do parents find difficult about their child's schooling?

2. To what extent do children feel that they are included in their school? To what extent do parents feel that their child is included at school?

3. How do children think they are perceived by their school peers? How do the children's parents think their children are perceived by others in the school?

There were eight interviews in total, one for each of the participants. These were all completed in a two-week period. The interviews each lasted between 25 and 40 minutes. The interviews were also audio-recorded so that I could later transcribe what was said. Parents were present during all the child interviews. Directly after the interviews, I transcribed the recordings and checked over the transcriptions to ensure I had made no errors in transcribing what the participants had said. While transcribing the interviews, I wrote notes on my initial reaction to what the participants said on the same document, I did this as the experience of the interview was still fresh in my mind. These notes helped me understand what was said by my participants and gather my thoughts on the interactions between the participants and myself. I found this process helpful and was able to reflect on the notes I had made to think about emergent themes in the data.

Data Analysis

I chose thematic analysis to be my data analysis technique. Thematic analysis involves finding and reporting on key themes that emerge from the collected data. It is also widely used in phenomenological studies (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I chose thematic analysis because of its accessibility to novice researchers and because it is a useful method for examining the

perspectives of research participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six stages of thematic analysis. The six stages are described as:

1. Understanding the data: Reading the collected data to the point where the researcher understands what the participants have said.

2. Coding: A process of creating summarised codes from that dataset that may be relevant in answering the research questions.

3. Searching for themes: Sifting through the coded information and data to identify themes within the data. Also, placing relevant data under each theme.

4. Reviewing themes: Checking the themes against the dataset, seeing if the themes and data create a story of the data and that the themes will answer the research questions. This stage involves themes being refined.

5. Defining and naming themes: This stage requires a detailed explanation of the themes, their scope, and the story they tell. Also, names must be created for the themes.

6. Writing: Putting the narrative together, conceptualising it in relation to current literature.

My first priority was to understand the data and then code it, so that I could develop key themes from my data. I used Google Docs to analyse my transcriptions and look for keywords and develop the initial codes. Through reading and re-reading my data and reviewing my codes, I then developed a visual device that helped me understand children's school experience and their parents' perceptions through key codes. Reviewing the codes that I had developed from the transcriptions, I was then able to develop key themes from the data, which I separated for children and parents. I then reflected, as Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest, to make sure that the themes I had developed created a story from the data and would answer my initial research

questions. Once I was satisfied that I knew the data well enough and had derived themes from my initial codes, I went about naming and defining the themes.

Rigour and Trustworthiness

Rigour and trustworthiness underpin the quality of data collected in research. Merriam (2009) has stated that "to have any effect on either the practice or the theory of a field research studies must be rigorously conducted" (p. 210). To apply rigour and ensure my research was trustworthy, I consulted Guba and Lincoln's (1985) evaluative criteria for establishing the trustworthiness of qualitative data. Their criteria are:

- Credibility, confidence in the truth of the findings
- Transferability, that the findings have applicability in other contexts
- Dependability, that the findings are consistent and could be repeated
- Confirmability, the degree of neutrality in the research, and that the research findings are shaped by the respondents, not researcher bias

Creswell (2009:2012) asserts that researchers can easily degrade the credibility of qualitative research if they have any biases. However, data collection is never truly objective, meaning is socially constructed, and the process of reporting on the findings of this research was interpretative (Creswell, 2009). To address the issue of bias, I engaged in reflexivity, which is defined as: "An ongoing process that involves reflection to continuously construct (and shift) our understanding and social realities" (Cunliffe, 2004). I was aware that I came to this research with my own biases; for example, having ADHD myself was a bias I had regarding how I understood the research. As Malterud (2001) argues, a researcher's background can affect what they choose to investigate, the methods used, and the framing of conclusions. I kept a reflective journal

throughout the research process, which I used to record my methodological decisions and reasons, notes on the study sample, and notes on my own values and interests related to the research. This process also helped me understand that my role as a researcher was to report what was most important from the views of the children and parents, not what I understood as most important.

To ensure transferability in my research, I followed Shenton's (2004) recommendation and ensured my research included a thick description of the phenomenon under investigation. External validity is the extent to which the findings of a piece of research can be addressed to a wider population (Merriam, 2009). However, qualitative research findings are specific to a small number of participants involved in the study, so external validity is not possible (Shenton, 2004). Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Firestone (1993) present an argument that if a researcher understands the research in question to be similar to his/her own research, then it is possible to relate the findings to their own research. This is known as transferability. Therefore, to support transferability, I have provided the reader with a detailed description of the phenomenon under investigation, the schooling experience of children with ADHD, and their parents' perception. I have also provided detailed contextual information, where the study was based, the criteria for participation, the data collection methods, the number and length of data collection sessions, and the period over which this data was collected.

Guba and Lincoln (1985) explain dependability in terms of the findings of a study being consistent and being able to be repeated. However, it is important to note that Guba and Lincoln (1985) do not assume that repeating a study would result in the same findings due to the subjective nature of qualitative research. To support dependability, I have included a thorough

and detailed description of the methodology employed in this research to the extent that it could be repeated in another study.

Finally, confirmability ensures that as far as possible, the research findings reflect the experiences and ideas of the participants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher (Shenton, 2004). My research did not have the benefit of using triangulation, as I relied on interviews. However, I was clear in the description of the research, as Miles and Huberman (1994) recommend, regarding my own predispositions. I ensured that I included details of why I choose my particular method. As mentioned previously, I also engaged in a reflective journaling process, which I used to make myself more aware of my own biases in relation to the findings of the research.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics is an important process in any research. The broad purpose of ethics is to ensure research is conducted in a way that causes no harm to the research participants or members of society, knowingly or unknowingly (Merriam, 2009). Furthermore, ethics help to promote the general aims of the research, such as the search for knowledge and the intention to avoid errors in research; ethics promote respect, trust, and accountability; and ethics are essential for holding researchers accountable to the communities in which they are conducting research (Creswell, 2009).

Ethics approval for this research was given by the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee (ERHEC) at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand (Appendix E). During this study, I followed the ethical guidelines developed by the University of Canterbury's Educational Research Human Ethics Committee (ERHEC). These guidelines state that research must have the informed consent of participants, the participation of participants must be voluntary and not

obtained through coercion, guarantee confidentiality of data and individuals, avoid unnecessary deception, minimise risk to all participants, and be consistent with Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations.

Explaining the purpose of the research and gaining consent.

Gaining informed consent was paramount for this research. Informed consent is the process of a participant knowing what a researcher is asking of them in terms of requirements, knowing what the research is about, understanding his or her level of confidentiality in the study, and subsequently agrees to participate (Baker, 1999). I also understood as Bell (1999) has pointed out that participants need to be convinced of your integrity and the value of your research before they decide whether or not to cooperate. Co-operation of participants was never assumed in the process of making initial contact and gaining informed consent. As the parents I recruited attended *ADHD Matters* sessions once monthly, I thought that there might have been pressure to agree to participate in the research. They enjoyed coming to the sessions and may have felt that not participating would affect their relationship with me.To address gaining informed consent I engaged in a process, described here:

- I first sent an introductory email briefly outlining the purpose of the research and the requirements of the research. This email was sent to four selected members from the support group *ADHD Matters*. The email stated if interested in participating to reply to the email, and a follow up phone conversation would be arranged (appendix A).
- A request for a phone conversation to discuss the research with each parent individually was made at a mutually agreeable time (appendix A).

- A phone conversation was conducted to ensure that participants wanted to participate, it was also an opportunity to explain withdrawal was possible at any stage of the research.
- An email containing consent forms (appendix B) and information sheets for children (appendix C) and parents (appendix D) were sent. Parents were requested to explain the research to children, and if they were not interested that participation would be void.
- A mutually agreed time was set via email for the interview, to be conducted at parent's homes, and on a day when the parent(s) did not have work.
- All of the four selected parents and children agreed to be participants in the research and signed the formal consent form and returned this to me in an email.

Privacy, Anonymity and Confidentiality

Privacy was maintained by interviewing each of the parent and child participants separately. With regard to anonymity, pseudonyms were used for all of the participants. To maintain confidentiality, only my supervisors had access to the data. The data was stored on an external, encrypted, password protected hard drive, which was stored in a safe and non-public place. No information about the study was kept outside of this hard drive. Only myself and my supervisors had access to the data. Parents were made aware of all these points in the parent information sheet (appendix D) and the parental consent form (appendix B).

After the Interviews

Transparency was a key concern I had going into this research, due to the my relationship with the participants. I ensured that the participants, both parents and children, were aware that they would receive a transcription of what they had said. This was to provide an opportunity for them to check, add to, and/or amend any of their responses . I was also clear that once the thesis

was written, they would receive a copy. In addition, the parents were informed of the University of Canterbury complaints procedure in the information sheets (appendix D).

Chapter summary

This chapter has explained my use of a phenomenological methodology. Data was generated through semi-structured interviews with four children and their respective parent(s). The trustworthiness of the data was ensured as far as possible by using member checking, engaging in a reflective journal entry process throughout the study, and ensuring that the study included thick descriptions of the phenomena in question and the methodological decisions. I now move to the key findings from this research.

Chapter Four: The Findings

In Chapter Three, I noted that thematic analysis was used to derive key themes and sub-themes from the participants' interview transcripts. Four key themes and 13 sub-themes were found; these are presented in table two.

Table 2: The themes and subthemes of participants' transcriptions

Main theme	Friendships at school	Positive experiences of school	Negative experiences of school	The need to advocate
Children's sub themes	I. I feel lonely at school II. Making friends is hard	I. I have interests at school II. I like being outside III. Student-teacher relationships	I. Difficulties in the classroom II. Exclusion at school	
Parents sub themes	I. Lack of Social Skills make friendships hard	I. Positive teacher relationships II. Following interests at school III. Inclusion	I. Exclusion II. Difficulties in the classroom	I. The need to advocate

The themes in Table 2 create a narrative of the experience of school for the children in the current research and the parent's perception of that experience. All the central themes for children and parents were the same except the need to advocate which was only reflected in the parent interviews. The themes are discussed separately for the children and parents, except where the parent interviews helped provide context for their child's views. This was done purposely to

ensure that the child's voice, which was a focus of this research, did not become overshadowed by the parent findings. The quotations from interviews are taken verbatim.

Friendships at School

This section describes the central theme of friendships at school from the child and parent interviews. For children, the theme of friendships was centred on rejection from their peers, which caused feelings of loneliness at school. Although some of the children also had a positive experience of friendships at school, most of the children found making and maintaining friendships difficult. All the parents in the current research perceived that their child had a social skill impairment, which led to peer rejection at school.

Child Perceptions

I Feel Lonely at School

Lily, Owen, Wilson, and Frank all struggled with feelings of loneliness at school. They wanted more friendships and to spend less time alone during playtimes at school. For the children in the current research, these feelings were features of their everyday school life, and it was a significant finding of the research.

Owen described difficulty playing with other children, and having a lack of friendships at school which left him feeling lonely at playtimes. Although he could identify two friends, one was described as not wanting to engage in games while his other friend would play with other children. This left Owen as an onlooker on other children's play; this reality upset him. As he explained,

> "everyone's always quite busy, they're playing with their friends. I only have two friends at the school, and one of my friends play with other friends, and my other friend just walks around, so I don't really have very much to do at lunch, but other kids do and it's not great".

Owen mentioned that his friends would often not play with him despite believing they would include him in games. He explained, *"*well I lose my friends, and I wait for them because they say they're going to play with me". Owen described feelings of abandonment and social undesirability. He understood other children being "busy playing" to mean that he was not allowed to join their game. Loneliness was a real experience for Owen that manifested at lunchtime and caused some anxiety. He described looking forward to lunchtime only when he knew there was someone to play with, but he lacked these opportunities. He explained, "well, I think I don't have many friends". While he wanted to have friends to play with and did not want to be alone at lunchtime, he saw it as inevitable because he could not see a way to make friends.

Owen saw other children at playtimes playing with friends, which made him aware of his lack of friendships at school, "other kids do and it's not great". The fact that he did not have friends like the other children upset him; it gave him a bleak outlook of playtimes. His statement, "I bet when I'm older, it's going to happen too, and I won't have any friends", suggested that he thought this situation would extend beyond his schooling experiences. It was interesting, however, that he explained that he did not feel lonely in class, because he would work in groups set by his teacher; therefore, he was surrounded by other children. The organised nature of the classroom was beneficial in this way; he was included with other children in the classroom.

Lily described feelings of loneliness and exclusion at school. She gave accounts of both her current school and previous school. At her previous school, Lily described how she felt lonely despite wanting to play with other children, especially at playtime. Other children were reluctant to include her in games or even talk to her, and at times she was actively excluded by others. She explained, "I walked around, well I didn't really do much. I didn't really play with the other kids there. Sometimes they didn't let me play". She told me that she would spend a lot of time alone in

the classroom, as other children “don’t talk to me much”.At her current school, she anticipated being lonely at playtime and brought things to school to do, describing that at lunch, “I usually just get whatever’s in my bag to do, like read a book”. Although she may have at times be content occupying herself with something from her bag, loneliness was evident in her interview. She responded with sadness, evident by her looking down at the ground, and expressed that she would have rather played with her friends at playtimes, though she would “often” lose her friends at playtime, which upset her. Lily’s mother also explained that:

> “She struggles like in a game, she struggles to follow what’s happening. The kids will rush out at lunch with their lunchboxes and already have ideas of what they want to do but it takes all her energy just to get her lunchbox and find a place to sit”.

The explanation from Francis was that Lily could not keep up with her classmates at lunchtime; she struggled to engage in games during playtime, causing her to be socially isolated. Despite being happier and having made some friends at her new school, loneliness still occurred as she struggled to keep up with these friends.

Frank described being lonely at playtimes. He explained that he would spend some lunchtimes “walking around alone”, and that “some kids don’t play with me, it makes me sad”. While Frank’s parents said they did not have much experience of what Frank did at lunchtime, they did mention that he often wanted to control games. Frank preferred to make his own games, even though other children, he explained, “don’t like the games I make”. He described feelings of anxiety when playing games created by others due to a lack of understanding of the rules. Wilson also struggled with rules in games, which sometimes meant he could be lonely at playtimes. He wanted more friends at school. He explained, “sometimes it would be good having more friends”.

More friends to Wilson meant more children that could potentially join his games. He said if he had to join others" games, "I probably just wouldn't really play".

Making Friends is Hard

Difficulty with establishing new friendships was a common theme in most of the children's interviews. Lily's experience of friendship at her previous school was not positive. When moving to her current school, she feared the prospect that she would "have to make new friends". While Lily felt more included at her current school, she still struggled with developing friendships as she explained, "sometimes you don't know how to make friends with some people or know if they're your friend".

Owen struggled to establish and maintain friendships, and that contributed to his feelings of loneliness and description of feeling "abandoned" by his friends at school. He explained that he was able to make friendships but the difficulty was keeping them. Owen summarised his difficulty with friendships, stating that "they will start as friends but not end up being friends" because of something "mean" that they did. Part of the difficultly of making friends for Owen was the perception that he thought other children held of him. Owen explained that "other children think I'm silly and then they won't play with me anymore". He defined two types of how he thought he could be annoying to his peers, one being intentional and one he described as silly, which is "just not listening or running around too much". Being silly was not something he felt he could control, and thus was not done with the intent to annoy others. "I make noises and people don't like that". He thought other children viewed him as too immature to play with which left him feeling upset. He knew other children did not like him being silly and sometimes would even yell at him. Being silly and annoying were self-perceptions that Owen struggled with, and he wanted other children to understand that he did not mean to be annoying.

Similarly, Wilson struggled with the idea that other children's perceptions of him led to difficulty making friends. He thought that he had a reputation with other children as being mean. He explained that "sometimes kids are scared of me, cause they think I'm angry, but I'm not". Situations that could explain Wilson's self-perceived reputation could have been his need to control playtime games and that if people did not let him control the rules, he would become frustrated. This frustration manifested for Wilson as "yelling sometimes at other people" (Wilson). Wilson's parents said that if he could not control games, he would often "sabotage, whatever the other kids were playing" (Emma). When I asked Wilson if making new friends was difficult, he said, "Not all the time, when I started school, I had more friends but not anymore. When new kids come, I don't talk to them all the time". Wilson found making and maintaining friends hard because he was not always open to making new friends. He described that many children at school were "annoying" and it would be easier if "everyone" was a friend. He did have a small group of close friends that he described as frequently changing.

Although making friends was described as difficult for the children in this research, there were some examples of positive friendship experiences at school. Frank had a core group of friends with whom he played most days and enjoyed going to school to see them. He said that his friends were "nice to me" and that he had two "good friends". He would always be placed with these two friends on trips and enjoyed playing with them at playtimes. Similarly, to Frank, Lily felt that there were some children at her current school who were "nice". She had a best friend and described that having a best friend was "really nice" and that "she likes doing the same things as me and she's nice to me". When asked if she enjoyed coming to school, she used the word "included", which she compared to her last school where she felt excluded and had a negative experience. Lily described how being included and having some friends made her look forward to coming to school

each day. She still struggled with friendships but was happy that at her current school, she did have some friends. Francis also shared this perception and shared that "she's happy because she's more accepted at this school and actually looks forward to going to school each day".

Parent Perceptions

Lack of Social Skills Make Friendships Hard

When Wilson's parents, Jack and Emma, were asked about Wilson's experiences of friendships, Emma shared: "He does have a lack of social skills with the other kids, which makes things really tricky for him, I guess keeping friends is a big one". The friends that he did have, Emma perceived as "on and off". Difficulties with friendships and playground behaviour were seen as a social skills issue. As Emma explained, "he doesn't really understand how to play with them in an acceptable way". This concerned his parents as it was something they thought hindered his ability to develop friendships. Another barrier that Emma shared was that "Wilson does tell a lot of lies to other kids at school, such as that we're beating him etc., which does have an impact, especially around parents wanting to send kids over for playdates". Emma's description of Wilson's lying could be understood as a lack of social skills. She understood the lying and not being accepted to playdates to be directly correlated. The lie she mentioned, "we're beating him", was a serious allegation, which other parents would not have taken lightly had they heard it passed on from their children.

Jack and Emma mentioned that Wilson was engaged in team sports and viewed the on-going nature of this as positive for Wilson. They stated, "we're really lucky, he's been in the same football team for ages". However, Jack mentioned the future of his involvement was uncertain, as Wilson is "not a team player". A team player could be described as someone who follows the rules and is agreeable to play a game with. Wilson's parents also suggested that as other children became

"more aware of Wilson, they don't really want to be with him" (Emma). They both perceived that he would eventually be excluded from the team.

Betty perceived that Owen had difficulties in making friends. She said that "he's definitely immature compared to kids of the same age which doesn't help with making friends". Betty perceived that his lack of maturity was directly correlated to his social skills, which "have been an issue" as it is "difficult for him to see what's appropriate socially, or maybe things like tuning into what other people are doing or saying". She mentioned that for a long time at school, she thought he was lonely at school. She understood Owen to be upset often about friends. Still, she was helpless to assist in this matter despite having tried in vain on many occasions to organise playdates, which were rarely taken up by other parents. "We never used to talk about friends at home", which was an indication for Betty that her son struggled with making friends.

Francis perceived social skills to be an issue for Lily. She perceived that lunchtime games could be challenging for Lily if she did not understand the rules of a game, "like if she's playing a game and a rule suddenly changes, she often won't be able to keep up with the game, she'll opt-out". Francis was concerned that Lily's lack of confidence to participate in what other children were doing would encourage her to isolate herself, reading a book at lunch by herself instead of playing. Furthermore, Francis perceived that Lily would seek out "children that moved to a slower beat" and thought this allowed Lily to play at a slower pace.

Ian described how Frank "struggles with social skills and knowing what's appropriate and what's not" and Claire mentioned that "socially there are things like joining and playing games etc. that he would struggle with I would say". They also highlighted that following rules was something that Frank found challenging. Claire discussed how Frank's passion for his interests was potentially off-putting for other children as "he's very focused on just the things he's interested

in and that could get a bit boring for kids". Sometimes, Frank could push his interests on other children, which they did not always share. Claire thought that the fixation Frank had on his own interests hindered his ability to make friends as engaging in other children's interests was difficult for him to do, and "if he doesn't want to he won't do it, he is extremely stubborn like that".

Summary

The main theme that was apparent for all four children and six parents was the difficulty in making and maintaining friendships. This theme led the narrative when children and parents talked about friendships at school. In addition to this theme, all the children described feelings of loneliness at school, and most believed that other children's perceptions of them were negative. However, some of the children did discuss positive friendships at school, as did some parents. Parents" perceptions echoed those of their children, namely that friendships at school are challenging. However, parents perceived the reason for this was their child's lack of social skills and understanding of socially acceptable behaviours.

Positive Experiences of School

This section describes the positive experiences of school that children had and the positive aspects of the school from the parents' perspectives. There were elements of school that were positive for the children. One of the key positive experiences at school for all the children was being able to use their interests at school, which all the children talked keenly about in the interviews. Other positive elements of school for children were being in the outdoors and positive teacher relationships. For parents, similarly using interests at school was understood as positive for their child, and positive teacher relationships represented a positive element of their child's schooling.

Child Perceptions

I have Interests at School

All the children talked about school being more engaging when their interests were used as part of learning. Pursuing interests at school was important to the children; it was a reason to look forward to going to school.

When asked what school should be like, Owen said, “You should be able to cook, make things, and go outside”. Engaging with school when it did not involve his interests was difficult for him. Owen’s school did learning through play for a small amount of time each day, and he was visibly excited when he explained to me the choices and opportunities he had to do hands-on activities. He explained, “I like making a lot of box houses, and I like making things. Like I get to do lots in learning through play”. He expressed an interest in hands-on activities and being motivated, being able to concentrate, and feeling happy when working on his interests, which were meaningful tasks to him. This was a valuable time for Owen each day, during which he could focus on his interests and was truly engaged in class. “I like being able to choose what I do better than the other stuff, some of the other stuff is so boring”. Having choices was an aspect of his school day, which was important to Owen as choices provided him something to look forward to.

Wilson described his favourite schoolwork activity to be “passion projects”, which allowed him to work on topics of interest, such as Greek gods and animals. His parents explained that he was able to spend a great deal of time focusing on both topics. Wilson was so engaged with passion projects that he found it difficult to prioritise his work, saying, “I struggle sometimes with my passion projects cause it’s really hard to choose what bits I want to find out”. Wilson found that compared with passion projects, “the stuff we learn in class isn’t really that interesting”, and it was hard to engage with. Classwork consisted of sitting on the mat, listening to the teacher, either being

sent to do independent work or group work, and then talking about the work back on the mat. Wilson described how “it can be really boring listening to someone talk for a long time, and then doing the work and coming back to the mat”. When he described why he enjoyed the passion projects over teacher-led learning, he explained that being able to “choose” made it “interesting”. Although passion projects are “only on a Friday”, this was a time he looked forward to.

Frank did not show much enthusiasm when talking about school work. However, he showed a lot of enthusiasm when talking about his interest. He explained, “space is the best thing to look at. I know everything about space” and showed excitement as he described how he was once able to work on a space project for school. Frank was eager to explore his interest at school, where he had some opportunities to do so, although he said that most exploring was done at home. Space was something he was able to focus on that he genuinely enjoyed learning about. Frank’s mother expressed the view that he would be more engaged at school if he could follow what interested him and that is was challenging to engage Frank in something he was not interested in.

Lily had a love of anything to do with horses. She showed excitement in the interview when she told me that she could go horse riding through a programme organised by her school once a week. At school, she was able to explore horses frequently in class, write stories about them, and research her interest in horses on the internet. When I asked her about her schoolwork, she said she felt “happy and interested in stuff like reading books and searching up about horses”. Lily further explained that, “I like horses, sometimes I get to look up stuff about horses at school, I’m good at researching”. Being able to research her interests was a confidence boost for Lily, who during the interview said she struggled with some aspects of schoolwork.

I Like Being Outside

Frank told me that “outside is my favourite thing”. He also mentioned during the interview how much he enjoyed trips to the park. “I sometimes get to go to Church Park, if we’re lucky... trips are the funnest”. Frank looked forward to coming to school to be outside playing. He described how being outside allowed him to “play games with everyone”, “run around”, “you can do what you want”, and it is “really fun”. Being outside gave Frank the freedom and choice that was not possible in the classroom. However, he told me that he was only able to go outside for the occasional visit to the park and school trips.

Owen said that “I really like to go outside and run around”. He thought that school should involve more of the outdoors, and he enjoyed the freedom and self-direction that came with being outside at school. Owen described a good teacher as one that “lets you go outside for lessons and play class games” and said that the best lessons he had at school were ones that involved being outside. For Owen, the outdoors was the best part of the school day except for trips. “I like to climb trees and when we go to the park I climb trees, and that’s quite good, but trips are the best” (Owen). Being outside allowed Owen to experience hands-on activities like climbing trees and playing games.

Wilson enjoyed physical activity being outside during school and saw Physical Education (PE) as something he was “really good at”, “I really like PE and high jump... I came first at interzones and northern zones, so I’m pretty good” (Wilson). Being outside felt like a break from the classroom to Wilson. It did not require sitting down or listening to someone for a long time, which Wilson described as the worst part of being in the classroom. Wilson said that the classroom was “pretty boring, especially when we’re sitting down”. Occasionally, his teacher would have their lesson outside, which he said that he enjoyed more than being in the classroom. Similar to

the other children, he also enjoyed class games. He explained, “when the teacher does games with you, that’s really good too”.

Lily enjoyed being outdoors at school, particularly during class time. She said that when her teacher would take the class outside during lessons, she would organise games for them to play, which Lily enjoyed as other children in her class would be playing with her. This gave her the opportunity to socialise with other children in her classroom who otherwise may not play with her during breaks. “The teacher plays games with us, and it’s good cause you get to be with your friends when you’re outside and more kids play with me” (Lily).

Student-Teacher Relationship

Lily had a positive relationship with her current teacher, whom she described as “very nice… she’s very funny and makes me laugh”. Lily’s teacher had made an effort to get to know her. She integrated horses into Lily’s class and homework frequently. Another positive comment Lily made about her teacher was that, “she tells me what we’re doing, she always tells me when we’re doing things, and she doesn’t yell”. This was significant to Lily as her teacher would never spring something on her without warning, which contributed to Lily trusting her teacher at school.

Owen’s relationship with his teacher was positive. To Owen, the most important thing his teacher did was listen to him when something went wrong at school. “He always listens when I didn’t do something, he’s not mean” (Owen). I believe that Owen likely had experiences in the past where teachers had not listened to him, as he stated that “some teachers don’t listen to you” and described a nice teacher as someone “who listens to me”. Owen trusted his teacher because he always listened. A good teacher was also described by Owen as someone who was “funny” and who “doesn’t yell”. Although Owen had a positive and trusting relationship with his teacher, he sometimes felt he could use more help.

Frank understood a good teacher to be someone who is “funny, and makes me laugh”, and “plays games”. Frank’s mother said in her interview that Frank “has a good relationship with his teacher” (Claire). Frank saw his teacher as someone who was friendly and described that she was “nice to me” (Frank). He also said that his teacher “doesn’t yell at me”.

Wilson said that his teacher was “kind”, “funny”, and that “people actually listen to her”. He had respect for his teacher and saw being in her class as a positive experience. During the interview, he also said that “she doesn’t yell at people”. For all of the children, yelling was a theme that emerged. Therefore, it would be a reasonable assumption to conclude that they all have had experiences of being yelled at by teachers.

Parent Perceptions

Positive Teacher Relationships

Francis described Lily’s relationship with her teacher positively as “her relationship with her current teacher has been massive for her; she really cares about Lily”. Francis saw Lily’s teacher as being a large part of her positive school experience. In the interview, she described how Lily trusted her and how the teacher put in the effort to help her with aspects of the school day. “[Lily]’s a routine person and the school provides that for her. Whenever something big is happening at school her class always gets a social story from her teacher” (Francis).

Owen’s mother, Betty, thought that Owen trusted his teacher. She saw that Owen’s teacher had tried to understand him and showed him respect at school. She echoed what Owen said in his interview. Betty thought that his teacher “listens to him”. She described how his teacher saw himself as equal to the children and never “talks down to Owen”, which contributed to gaining Owen’s respect. A significant point for Betty was that she believed Owen “felt safe with his teacher”, which reinforces her perception that Owen had a positive relationship with his teacher.

When Emma was asked about how she believed Wilson was perceived by the teachers, she said, “Yeah, really good, they like him and have a good opinion of him. We really like the school”. A positive description of Wilson’s teacher emerged, and Emma felt that Wilson enjoyed being in his teacher’s class, stating that “she instilled a lot of positive stuff in him, it’s been really good him being in that class, and he enjoys her”. For Emma, the relationship that Wilson had with his teacher was important. From her perspective, it improved Wilson’s school experience.

Claire shared that “[Frank’s] homeroom teachers all have a really strong relationship with him”. In addition to his teachers, Frank was liked by and had a positive relationship with the Principal and Special Needs Co-Ordinator (SENCO). “He’s quite responsive to both the SENCO and principal”. Claire commented that his teachers always communicated how his day at school had been and showed an interest in Frank at school.

Following Interests at School

Betty thought Owen enjoyed hands-on activities at school more than teacher-led learning. She described that he could become disengaged in class, as the “normal way of learning just doesn’t work for him”. Although she saw that there were limitations at school for Owen in regard to following his interests, she did see that Owen was still, at times, able to follow them and learn in a way that he found enjoyable. When asked if Owen has opportunities to do hands-on activities, she said, “Yeah quite a bit, and they have a few trips, he does get to do things at school that he enjoys”. Betty saw that a positive part of the school for Owen was that “he’s able to try new things out” and “follow through with things”. She referred to school projects, such as Kapa Haka and a school kitchen as positive aspects of school for Owen, which “empowered” him to see what he was capable of.

Francis thought that Lily's teacher weaved her interests into learning, which Francis saw as positive. She talked about Lily's interest in horses and that her teacher tried to use this in class as much as possible. "Her teacher lets her use horses a lot in class, like research projects and reading books, which gets her really into her work". Francis also mentioned that Lily's teacher was aware of her "hyperfocus" and that allowing her to focus on this at school would mean she was more engaged with her work. To Francis, Lily being able to follow her interests contributes positively to her schooling experience. She mentioned that she was "lucky" that Lily had been placed in the class that she had, given that her teacher has focused so much on her interests. Claire also thought that Frank was "very focused when anything involves his interests".

Inclusion

Francis thought that Lily was included at her current school compared to her previous school. She spoke of how Lily did not enjoy going to her previous school. "She's been at the same school for a year but came from a school where she didn't feel included. She was quite bullied, we thought to try something new. She definitely feels part of the class now but struggles with friendships. But she definitely feels important and valued".

Her new school was different. There, she felt included and was part of the class. Francis explained that although she could see that making friends and social skills were still an issue, Lily had some friends at her new school. Her teacher was proactive in engaging her in school-work, and more importantly, Lily enjoyed going to school. "Just yesterday we were talking about maybe moving houses, and she said, yup that's fine but you know we can't move schools" (Francis). Francis was thankful to the school for how they had accommodated Lily and "made the school for the kid, not the other way around".

Claire and Ian described Frank's school as an inclusive school. Part of the reason they had chosen for Frank to go to the school was its inclusive reputation. "The class doesn't go on trips or do anything unless everyone is allowed to take part" (Ian). The inclusive nature of the school was extended to Frank. Both Claire and Ian were comfortable knowing that their son would not miss out on school activities or opportunities due to being excluded.

There were parent descriptions of positive friendship experiences. Similar to Frank's and Lily's descriptions of positive friendship experiences, their parents understood them to have positive experiences of friendships at school. Claire thought that although Frank sometimes struggled socially, he "has a core group of buddies who he spends lots of time with" at school. She was happy that Frank could make friends with a range of children from different classes in the school. Francis too understood Lily to have some positive friendship experiences. She spoke of how Lily "compares lots between this and her last school, and she really remembers being bullied there" and although Francis felt that Lily "does miss out on the friends" side of things", she described Lily having a best friend at her new school as "massive" and believed her daughter to be much happier and accepted, "when she talks about this school it's really positive" (Francis).

Summary

There was an alignment between what children and parents understood as being positive at school. All four children talked at length about their interests at school and that being outside was desirable. Interests were an important aspect of school for the four children. They all desired for their interests to be used at school, and they were to varying degrees. Some of the parents also commented on the importance of using their children's interests at school as it was a way of engaging their child at school. Some parents discussed ways in which their child's school was

inclusive and how this was important. Both children and parents agreed that the positive relationships the children had with their teachers were a positive element of school.

Negative Experiences of School and Exclusion

This section describes the theme of negative experiences at school and exclusion. Children felt that the classroom was a difficult environment. It could be boring, and it was hard to filter out constant distractions. Parents, too, understood the classroom to be a difficult environment for their child. Some of the parents perceived their child to struggle with distractions. More significant for parents was the perception that their child was socially excluded at school. Children, too, perceived that exclusion was a part of their school experience.

Child perceptions

Difficulties in the Classroom

At times, Lily had some difficulty concentrating and following what was happening in class, “I have to try and remember what we’re doing, and I can’t focus” (Lily). She would sometimes forget what was happening, which could confuse and create anxiety for her. She was aware that she was prone to forgetting what was going on but said that she was often too tired to pay attention all the time. At both her current and previous schools, Lily said that “the mat is boring”. I took this to mean that Lily found that sitting and listening on the mat was not engaging but was a feature of her school day.

Lily struggled to make progress at her previous school. She felt that “I didn’t learn much” and did not feel helped. Not getting the help she needed has caused her to feel that she had fallen behind. Being disengaged was also an issue for Lily at her previous school. “I kind of just sat around in the classroom and didn’t really do much”. She did not see her previous school as a place

to learn. She had the impression that her teachers did not worry about her lack of progress and did not provide the help she felt she needed.

Wilson found being in the classroom difficult and, at times, boring. As mentioned previously, he found focusing in class challenging as it involved too much listening on the mat, being still, and repetitive tasks. The routine of sitting, listening, working, and back to sitting was not engaging to Wilson. He knew that this way of learning did not suit him. Instead, he looked forward to lessons related to his interests or outside and active. He often found himself easily distracted in the classroom, finding it difficult to resist the urge to talk to people. Situations where silence was required proved to be challenging for Wilson. “I try to stay focused but it’s really hard, cause there’s so many people, and you want to talk to everyone”. During group work, distractions could surface in the classroom. Wilson faced a dilemma where he wanted to be with his friends in the classroom; however, he would often be distracted by them. “Yeah, my last group was really hard cause they all kept distracting me, if someone talks to me, it’s really hard not to talk”.

Owen struggled with a range of constant distractions at school, describing everything from “noise, and stuff in my head, like everything”. Owen understood that these distractions caused him difficulties in the classroom, such as falling behind on schoolwork or forgetting what the class was doing. He was aware that he could become distracted very quickly, which he disliked. “It’s very annoying, cause when the teacher says we’re doing something at one o’clock, like maths I forget and everyone else knows what’s happening except for me. I forget to look at the clock, plus I never get my work done”. Distraction was a big part of Owen’s life at school; having to focus on instructions, a timetable, and what the teacher was saying was difficult for him.

Owen found many aspects of the school day unenjoyable. He described having to work on “boring sheets”, being disinterested in what was going on in class, and unengaged in what he was

working on in many lessons. In some cases, he described that he would sit down for entire lessons and not listen to anything being said. “I just kind of sit there, I do not really do much work at school a lot of the time, sometimes I don’t even know what we’re doing”. Owen’s experience of mat time was similar to Wilson’s, “Being on the mat with the class is hard, it’s pretty boring, and I get distracted”. Similarly, Frank, too, found that sitting and having to listen for extended periods was difficult. He did not enjoy it but described that he would often have to sit and listen. “Sometimes doing work and sitting down it’s hard, sitting down cause you have to listen”.

Exclusion at School

Lily experienced a form of social exclusion from her peers; again, this was from her previous school experience. She stated that “I didn’t have any friends”. Often, at lunchtime, she would have no one to play with, no children to participate in games with, and as mentioned previously, she told me that the other children wouldn’t let her play. Owen, too, experienced social exclusion at school. Owen described himself as not having many friends at school, which upset him, as he saw other children at lunchtimes with friends and wanted to be in the same position. “I don’t really get to play at lunch because no one will play with me”. He wanted children to include him in games but struggled with making this happen. For Owen, this was a form of social exclusion.

At times, Owen did not receive adequate support in school. He said that he struggled with his classwork. “I don’t get a lot of stuff”. He found the classroom difficult, but also, he said that he did not get much support with his work, “I don’t get very much help”. When he did not receive help with his work, he said: “I just kind of sit there, I don’t really do much work at school a lot of the time”. The lack of help he received meant that he often would not do anything when he was stuck with work, which meant he could not make progress. Lily, too, was disengaged at her

previous school. Her description of what she did in the classroom was concerning. “I kind of just sat around in the classroom and didn’t really do much, I didn’t understand the stuff”. Lily’s descriptions provide an account of exclusion, where she was aware of her lack of progress and the fact she didn’t receive help from her teachers. She struggled with her work and was excluded from the support that she needed at school.

Parents’ Perceptions

Exclusion

Some parents perceived that their child was excluded to varying degrees at school. Emma talked about other parents’ views of Wilson and how these views acted to exclude him at school. She described the negative stigma that came with his ADHD diagnosis and that she was helpless to change others” perceptions of the diagnosis. “The judgement is really difficult”. Emma said that other parents were unwilling to have Wilson for playdates, which affected Wilson as it limited the opportunity for friendships at school. “Ever since I said Wilson has ADHD playdates with his two friends haven’t really come back the other way”.

Emma and Jack did not think Wilson had a good reputation with either parents or children. Jack talked about the negative perception other children could have of Wilson passed on by their parents. “Yeah, like Wilson really struggles, and the other parents really see this. His reputation with parents isn’t great, which is a problem, cause of what they feedback to their own kids”. For Emma and Jack, parent perceptions of Wilson were a way in which Wilson was excluded, and that made it difficult for him to have opportunities to make friends.

Francis thought that Lily was included, to a degree, at her current school. However, she had a contrasting view of her previous school, where she thought Lily was excluded both from the curriculum and by her peers. Being excluded from the curriculum was Lily not making progress

at school and not receiving the support she required. Francis described how Lily made little progress at her previous school. Francis, a trained teacher, would go in after work and on weekends "to try and help them, share things with them". However, no progress was being made with Lily. For Francis, the final straw was a Ministry of Education Occupational Therapist visiting Lily and reporting back that "Lily spent the whole time sucking her thumb and walking in circles".

Francis was upset and feared for her daughter's future at school. Her view of Lily's past school was that "her teacher had pretty much just been ignoring her". She described that the school did not want to label Lily as they wanted to avoid deficit thinking, which was explained as a viewpoint held by all school teachers. The school did not acknowledge that Lily needed specific help at school and would not try strategies to work with Lily. To Francis, she had not been given the support she needed at school, which hindered any opportunity of her making progress. This was exclusion through a lack of support. Francis was upset by what had occurred at Lily's previous school. The support Lily was denied caused her to fall behind academically at school.

> "The teachers wanted to move so far away from deficit thinking that they didn't want to actually believe that Lily was capable of less, so instead of using strategies etc they just wanted her to be treated and taught the same. They were really afraid of deficit thinking and were really reluctant to do anything. I tried to make resources, talk to the staff, she had the ADHD diagnosis at that point but they weren't willing to try anything different with her, she really fell behind because of it".

In Francis's view, Lily was also socially excluded at her previous school. Francis described that she had a lack of friendships and that Lily was often alone. Francis knew that her daughter was unhappy at her previous school. "She was being bullied there, and that people weren't nice and she didn't actually have any friends there, so I think when she talks about this school, it's

really positive". However, even at her current school, Francis saw snippets of Lily being excluded. She was not invited to birthday parties, and many friendships Lily thought she had, were in Francis's eyes, not reciprocal. "Yeah, two children who I would say also would list her as a friend. She would list five friends, but only these two would say the same back. I have to line up playdates for her. Other than that, she's not invited to birthday parties. She never really gets invited to anything". Francis described Lily's new school positively, even though Lily continued to be socially excluded, in Francis's view, it was a better situation than Lily's previous school.

Difficulties in the Classroom

Betty had the perspective that Owen struggled to learn in a traditional sense and found the classroom difficult. She explained: "Sitting and learning in a linear way is really hard for him. The process has to be fitted around him and how he works quite a bit, he likes doing hands-on things". Betty thought that Owen "needs things to be broken down sometimes. Otherwise, he can just be lost, which happens a bit with his work". She saw this as only happening sometimes, and when it didn't, she thought Owen was lost in terms of what to do or how to do it. Although Owen struggled, Betty knew he was happy when he was able to engage in some hands-on activities like "dancing" and "creating things".

Claire identified that Frank had difficulty making academic progress in the classroom. To boost his academic progress at school, she had taken the initiative to organise a specialist tutor for Frank each week. Claire felt that the school's ability to address Frank's lack of progress was inadequate. Weekly private tutoring sessions were essential to ensure he stayed on track in the classroom. When I asked her about Frank's Individual Education Plan (IEP) and her confidence in whether it helped with Frank's challenges, she said, "to be honest I think he gets more from his sessions with Jennifer, it's a really productive thing, he wouldn't make progress if he just had

school". Jennifer was a private tutor working with Frank, and the school "were awesome with giving Jennifer space and time to do her lessons" (Claire), which Claire was grateful for. Claire did not have confidence in the school's ability to help Frank make progress.

Summary

For the children in this study, the classroom was at times a difficult place. The traditional style of learning, sitting quietly and listening to someone speak, did not work for them. The experiences of the children included difficulty with distractions at school and finding classroom instruction and classwork to be boring or hard to remember. Exclusion was an experience for some children. Exclusion in the classroom came from some children not receiving the help they needed; social exclusion arose from being excluded from peer groups and playtime activities. For some parents, exclusion existed among their children's classmates and, similar to the children's experiences, exclusion from the classroom through lack of help.

The Need to Advocate

Advocacy was brought up in all the parent interviews, and it was an action they deemed necessary to get the support that they believed their child needed at school. Francis was an advocate for Lily's schooling at both schools. At Lily's previous school, there was a need to advocate for the school even to acknowledge that Lily needed different support from the rest of the children. Francis had tried, to no avail, to get support for her daughter. She described how she went into the school, offered her time, collated resources, and had meetings with teachers, all of which is a form of advocating for Lily. "I actually went into her old school often to make resources and try and get her teachers to use what I thought was going to help her. I had to be really proactive to try and get the school to work for her". However, the school wanted to see Lily as just like any other child,

and teachers “pretended there was nothing different about her” (Francis), which Francis saw as counterproductive to Lily making progress.

Francis felt that advocacy was still necessary for Lily at her current school because there was a lack of understanding of ADHD.

> “There’s not enough understanding of ADHD by teachers, this school is ok, but I think ASD is well understood and there’s courses etc, but there’s no training or anything for ADHD whatsoever, I’ve looked into it, there are still lots of basic misconceptions. The thing that helps the most is my relationship with her teacher”.

Lily’s current teacher was open to new ideas and learning about ADHD. Francis saw a gap in teacher training that ADHD had no courses available for teachers, which limited the opportunity for teachers to learn about the disorder. It was also interesting that she mentioned Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) was well understood, and there were courses available for teachers. Francis understood that ADHD was not a priority for schools; ASD, however, was. Francis perceived that if she were not proactive in sharing her knowledge of what Lily needed at school, then no one would. She perceived that whatever teacher she had or school she was in, she would need additional support to succeed, which Francis would need to advocate for. Of Lily’s future at school, Francis said: “She’ll always need support”. Lily, at her new school, had an IEP. However, Francis described that the once-yearly meeting was “over pretty quickly”. Francis valued her relationship with Lily’s teacher over the IEP, which she did not see as being able to help Lily at school drastically.

Claire felt that making progress in the early years of Frank’s schooling partially relied on having support for him at school. She used the word “hustle” to describe the process of getting any support at school for Frank. Claire explained why advocating for support was so necessary for

Frank. The explanation was that as parents, Claire and Ian had to advocate to ensure Frank could receive some support, however small it was. The way she described advocating indicated a lifelong journey as Claire suggested that Frank would eventually need to advocate for himself.

"I felt like it was our job as his parents to be his advocate until he's of an age when he can actually do that. Our experience has been that Frank's challenges are moderate, not severe, and because of that, it's difficult for any funding or support, we don't get anything extra. He definitely deserves more" (Claire).

Because Claire knew options for support were limited, due to Frank's challenges not being severe enough, she feared Frank could "slip under the radar". It was because of this that Claire and Ian decided to pay for the highly qualified private tutor mentioned previously. Claire began to lead the process instead of the school, using goals Frank's tutor had set, ensuring that what the school was committing to in the IEP was based on what she thought would benefit Frank. She was an advocate for making school more accessible for Frank.

Lack of support at school was a perception that was also shared by Betty in regard to Owen's schooling. I've always had to push for that, there isn't any that he can actually get (Betty). Any attempts to get support for Owen at both his past and to a lesser extent at his current school were futile as he was ineligible to receive it. At his last school, it wasn't until Betty read Owen's report card that she realised he was falling behind as there was no earlier communication from his teacher. Report cards only furthered Betty's desire for Owen to have support at school. She was in a situation where report cards were reporting that Owen was not making progress, but he was ineligible for any support at school. Owen's struggles at school were highlighted for Betty through national standards, which indicated to her areas at school he was falling behind in, which outweighed the areas in which Owen was succeeding. I've had bad experiences in the past

especially with national standards where his report cards just said all the things he couldn't do, that was hard, and I only found out in the report. The school didn't offer anything in terms of support or understanding. I don't think he's ever had any real support (Betty).

Owen's current school was more proactive in helping him. Betty was appreciative of his current school's initiative in agreeing to create an IEP for him, which for Betty was helpful as it gave her an insight into some of the challenges Owen faced at school, saying that "nothing like that had been arranged at another school". However, she was pessimistic that it could help Owen because without providing extra support to meet the IEP goals, she could not see how they would be realistically achieved and commented that "he hasn't really met any of the goals that were set for him".

Emma was unhappy with the lack of support provided for Wilson. She understood that there were limited resources that the school would be able to provide for him; however, she did not feel heard by the school regarding her concerns. She felt that the school believed an IEP was only appropriate for children with academic concerns, "but I tried to explain that because of his behaviour he needs one" (Emma). She had tried on numerous occasions to push for an IEP. "We really like the school, although they won't put an IEP in for him, which I've pushed for, for a while" (Emma). As a parent, she was an advocate for Wilson. However, she also admitted that she no longer pushed for Wilson to have an IEP, as the school treated him well. She feared that any support or positive views of Wilson could be in jeopardy if she pushed too much for the support. For Emma, Wilson's current school, although imperfect in the support they provided, accepted Wilson. Emma feared that another school would not accept Wilson and that he would suffer accordingly.

The extent of Emma's advocacy for Wilson was evident in the support she had provided the school. A psychologist had been paid for by Emma on multiple occasions to run professional development for staff at the school to build an understanding of ADHD. This was in the hope that Wilson would see a trickle-down in support from the school, "but we didn't see anything come Wilson's way from this". Actions such as paying for whole school professional development in Emma's case, and in Claire's case paying for a highly qualified supplementary tutor, went beyond advocating. It was a sign that they did not trust the education system enough to provide their child with satisfactory educational outcomes.

One support that all the parents did comment on as wanting for their children was some sort of social support. As to what social support meant, it was described by the parents as support that would help their child with social skills at school and help combat peer rejection at playtimes. Emma commented: "The playground is where he really needs help at school". Similarly, other parents described that social support was something that was lacking at school, but that it was needed. Francis said that "there is just nothing to help kids with things like making friends and being included at play, it's a big issue I think". Social support was something that parents in this research wanted for their children; they saw a need for their children to have help with making friends and being included during playtimes.

Summary

All the parents in this study saw advocating for their children at school as necessary. They spoke about the lack of support available to their children at school, and the small amount of support that their children did receive, had to be pushed for by them. Parents perceived that their children needed extra support both academically and socially to succeed. They believed that the schools mostly had positive intentions but lacked the understanding and resources to deliver

adequate support, which made some parents feel the need to step in themselves. Doing so could be understood as going beyond just advocating; they were intervening to make school work for their child.

Summary of Findings

The findings of this research show that young children with ADHD can articulate their experiences at school in a meaningful way. These findings provide a real description of what was understood as positive and negative about school from the perceptions of children and parents. The extent of overlap in the findings between the children's interviews and the parent's interviews highlights that there were many common aspects of school that were important to both children and parents. Furthermore, there was significant overlap in what the children and their respective parent(s) found to be important regarding school experiences. For example, for all the participants, peer rejection and difficultly during playtimes were understood to be a significant part of school.

The findings highlighted that there were issues with feeling included at school. Both parents and children perceived that being included was important but not always the case. Playtime at school was described in great detail; it was an important time of the day for the children, but it was also a time when a shared feeling of rejection and loneliness existed. However, there were positive aspects of school, namely being able to use interests at school, being outdoors in their learning, and having positive teacher relationships. Parents understood that teachers were mostly open and understanding and had positive relationships with their children. Although what was apparent too was the tension that existed between the support parents wanted for their child and the report their child actually received. There was a common

theme of parents having to act as advocates for their child's education. In the following chapter, these findings will be discussed in light of relevant research.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Three significant central themes were derived from the findings and are discussed in this chapter. The first theme is peer rejection and experiences of exclusion at school. In this section, I will explore how peer rejection played a significant part in the children's experiences of school and how it amounted to exclusion at school. The second theme refers to the two narratives of the classroom: negative and positive. In this section, I explore how the classroom environment was a challenge for the children. However, the children also described how the school environment could be positive. The final theme covers the ineffective support at school. In this section, I discuss how the support that the children received was ineffective according to their parents and issues surrounding the parents' perceptions of the support at the school. The three themes are discussed in relation to both the child and parent findings. Following the discussion, the limitations of the research are presented alongside suggested directions for further study, and finally the conclusion summarises the findings of this research.

Peer rejection and experiences of exclusion at school.

This research provided insight into the social realities that the four participant children faced at school. The descriptions that the children and their parents gave of peer relationships revealed that peer rejection was a frequent, persistent and important part of what was not good about school. The children's descriptions of playtimes at school often included times when they felt lonely and excluded. As defined in Chapter One, exclusion at school is understood in this thesis as children not fully participating in their school's academic or social life (Ainscow, 2006). Parents also described that exclusion was occurring at school for their children due to their children having a lack of positive peer relationships. However, the children also described times and activities during which they felt included, which offers valuable insight for schools because the findings may mean that these experiences could be occurring to a wider extent for children with ADHD throughout New Zealand.

There was a commonality in both the children and parent findings: that peer rejection was persistent, frequent and occurring during playtimes. It is noteworthy that the current research's findings did not reflect many positive peer relationship experiences for the children; it was not a significant part of their experiences of school; peer rejection was. Concerning what peer rejection constituted, the children described it as both being rejected from participating in games at playtimes and not having a group of peers to belong to. Peer rejection was discussed in the literature review as being widespread among children with ADHD and often caused by difficulties associated with participating in free-play situations (Ronk et al., 2011; Cordier et al., 2009). Similarly, the findings of this research revealed that free-play situations, specifically playtimes, were where peer rejection most often occurred for the children.

Playtime was a large focus during the children's interviews. It was an important time of the school day for them. However, playtime was frequently discussed in the findings because it was when the children felt rejected by their peers. These children did not want to feel left out at playtimes, but they perceived that they were much of the time. Playtimes have been found to be troublesome for children with disabilities because they are more likely to have difficulty engaging with peers and struggle more with the unstructured and unpredictable nature of playtimes (Brede et al., 2017; Calder et al., 2012; Qualter, 2003). The findings from this research, however, tell us more than just that playtime was difficult. The findings tell us that the children were trying to engage with their peers but did not always know how to go about doing this. Some children described difficulties following rules in games and difficulties entering different peer groups, both of which have been found to be key causes of peer rejection for children with ADHD (Normand et al., 2011; Ronk et al., 2011). These issues culminated for the children in the current research as the inability to fully participate during playtimes.

Peer rejection at playtimes was perceived as being so frequent by the children and their parent(s) that all the children and their parent(s) talked about loneliness during playtimes. Loneliness was a feeling of wanting more friendships and play opportunities at school. Owen's description of feeling lonely was bleak: "I bet when I'm older, it's going to happen too, and I won't have any friends." He had experienced loneliness and feared that it would be a recurring pattern in his life. The other children expressed a desire to have more peers to play with. They were lonely. The children described these feelings very openly. These were young children who could articulate that they were lonely at school, which suggests that these feelings of loneliness were not isolated and that they were frequently occurring. Furthermore, as discussed in the literature review, Jones and Hesse (2014) found that some adolescents in their research

understood that the peer rejection they experienced would persist into the future because they believed they would never be able to successfully form friendships. In the current research, children as young as eight discussed loneliness and persistent peer rejection. Jones and Hesse (2014) provided insight into how these feelings can translate into a lifelong narrative of peer rejection.

It is also interesting that these children openly described the loneliness they experienced at school. Previous research suggests that young children with ADHD have difficulty expressing awareness of their social realities at school (Gibbs et al., 2016; McMenamy & Perrin, 2008). Furthermore, studies on loneliness in children with ADHD have revealed that children with ADHD often underreport their experiences of loneliness at school, which is in contrast to the findings of the current research (Capodieci, Crisci & Mamarella, 2018; Hoza et al., 2002). Previous studies focusing on loneliness in children with ADHD have made use of specific lines of interview questioning and self-perception surveys (Capodieci, Crisci & Mamarella, 2018; Hoza et al., 2002). The current research highlights that different data collection methods may yield differing results regarding children's experiences of loneliness.

The loneliness that the children in this study experienced during playtimes was significant. Playtimes are not supposed to be times of the day at which young children are lonely. Playtime experiences are essential for children. Research has shown that when children discuss the positive aspects of their school day, playtimes are frequently identified as the most important and positive part of the school day (Blatchford & Baines, 2010; Darmody et al., 2010). This contrasts with the current study's findings; the children involved did not see playtimes as a highlight of their day; instead, playtimes could be upsetting and lonely.

Furthermore, playtimes and being included in free-play situations are important for young children's social skills and senses of self (Gray, 2015). Although it is known that children with ADHD struggle in free-play situations more than their typically-developing peers (Barkley, 2018; Cordier et al., 2009), it is concerning how much these children struggled with free play (i.e., to the extent that they were not always able to participate during playtimes). The issue of these children not fully participating at playtimes is an issue of inclusion. Participation in the social life of school is a foundation for inclusion. Therefore, these children experienced being excluded.

Support for the argument that these children were experiencing exclusion came from the insights of their parents. Some of them shared the understanding that their children did not receive the same opportunities for inclusion as other children. Invitations to playdates and birthday parties were described as rarely occurring. The children's opportunities to form positive relationships with their school peers outside of class were important to the parents. However, there was doubt that their children would be given such opportunities. A clear example of this was when Emma and Jack described how Wilson's future on a school football team was uncertain because they perceived that other children would become increasingly less accepting of his behaviour. Research suggests that children with ADHD often face a greater risk of having a negative reputation among peers and parents than their typically-developing peers, which can cause then to not get invitations to out of school activities (Sibley et al., 2010). The lack of invitations to out-of-school activities was perceived by these parents as exclusion.

The parents attributed peer rejection to their children having impaired social skills. The term social skills was used by all parents when referring to their children's difficulties with peer relationships. Parents understood social skills to be the ability to follow game rules of games,

control one's emotions, positive play habits and maturity. In particular, playtimes were a tricky time from the parents' perspectives: their children needed to negotiate entering peer groups, navigate playtime games and follow the rules of games, all of which were brought up as difficulties for their children. Significantly, parents did not talk about their children receiving any help with these difficulties. The parents saw their children as being in helpless situations. They perceived that their children were at risk of being consistently rejected by peers without help during playtimes. As discussed in the literature review, research suggests that social-skill impairment is often a significant concern of the parents of children diagnosed with ADHD (Cordier et al., 2009; Hoza et al., 2002; Newcomb & Bagwell, 1996; Bagwell et al., 2001; Greene et al., 2001).

Although the parents saw a lack of social skills as the cause of peer rejection at school for their children, the children's peer rejection experiences were not their fault; ADHD is known to cause difficulties making friends, executing social skills and engaging in free play (Brown, 2008; Barkley, 2018). To ensure these children are included during playtimes, attention needs to be paid not only to them but also to their peers, who do not always accept them. If inclusion is understood as meaning full participation at school (Ainscow et al., 2006), and in this context, the social life of school, then schools have a responsibility to reduce any barriers to social participation. It is likely that the children's peers did not know what to do to include them in their games and activities. I did not examine whether schools were teaching children how to include each other in this study, however the findings here suggest it may be something schools should consider. Certainly, the children in the current research would have benefited from their schools teaching their peers how to include them.

Furthermore, although this research was small in scale, given the similar findings across

all the interviews it is not unreasonable to suggest that peer rejection at playtimes may be something that is a common experience for children with ADHD in New Zealand's primary schools. If this is the case, then the issue of exclusion at playtimes for children with ADHD is an issue which requires a solution. Strategies that may have aided the children in the current research would likely benefit other children with ADHD.

The children themselves provided insight into how their schools could have helped them feel more included during playtimes. They all described feeling included when they were involved in structured activities and play with adult supervision. One such activity was teacher-led games. The descriptions of the times of the day and activities during which the children did not experience peer rejection all had one thing in common—they were structured. Additionally, most of the children did not report peer rejection as occurring during class time. Structured times of the day and times when adults were leading activities were important to these children. They were seen as opportunities to have fun with their peers, and they were times are which the children felt included. Previous research (Capodieci, Rivetti & Cornoldi, 2016) has suggested that due to the structured, predictable and safe nature of adult-led and classroom activities, peer rejection for children with ADHD is less likely to occur than in unstructured environments, such as playgrounds.

If the children felt included during structured times of the day, opportunities for structured, organised activities at playtimes would likely have been beneficial for the children. There is, however, a tension in the idea of creating structured playtimes for children. Playtimes are traditionally known as times at which children are free to play however they desire. The advantages of child-led unstructured free play are numerous and well-documented as essential for emotional, social and intellectual development (Gray, 2015). Nonetheless it is likely that

opportunities for structured and organised games, however small, would have benefited the children with ADHD in this research and other children who may have struggled with the unpredictable nature of playtimes. The advantage of structured playtime activities is that they enable children with ADHD and other children to be included and practice their social skills in a positive and safe environment (Mulryan-Kyne, 2014). Furthermore, Mrug et al. (2012) suggested that children with ADHD are more included when they are involved in structured activities than they are during free-play activities. A balance of structured activities and giving children agency to play freely may have benefited the children in the current research.

The Two Narratives of the Classroom: Negative and Positive

The descriptions that the children, and their parents to a lesser extent, gave of the classroom suggested two narratives: a negative narrative of the classroom and a positive narrative of the classroom. These narratives were candid descriptions of the classroom and what did not work for the children and what the children and parents understood as working at school. Although the descriptions of the classroom were mainly centred on the difficulties that the children faced at school, the positive descriptions they provided gave insight into how their classroom experience might be improved.

The narrative that dominated the children's and parents' descriptions of the classroom was a negative one in which the classroom environment was described as a struggle. The children were aware of what they found difficult in the classroom, and they could articulate that school was not overly engaging. Wilson provided a summary of his struggles in the classroom: "It can be really boring listening to someone talk for a long time, and then doing the work and coming back to the mat". All the children described having to sit on the mat and listen to the teacher as boring, but they also mentioned that this was a requirement of their school day. Parents also perceived that having to sit and listen in class for long periods of time was difficult for their children. Prosser (2008) argued that the traditional structure of the classroom, sitting and listening with the teacher being the source of knowledge does not work for children with ADHD. Further research suggests that children with ADHD struggle with the requirements of the classroom environment, such as sitting, listening, turn-taking, self-control, delayed gratification and constant distractions (Brown, 2008; Kendall, 2016; DuPaul & Stoner, 2016). Certainly, the findings of the current research indicate that the child participants struggled with the requirements of the classroom.

Along with the classroom being unengaging for the children, it was also full of distractions. Most of the children discussed distractions as a problem that made following what was happening in the classroom difficult. They described being frequently distracted in class. For many children with ADHD, distractions are difficult to ignore and cause constant frustration (Kendall, 2016). Furthermore, on average, children with ADHD are distracted two and a half times more than their typically-developing peers (Junod et al., 2006). The children in the current research understood that distractions impacted their ability to learn in class. However, they saw no way of mitigating distractions because they were frequent and always present in the classroom environment.

It is a reasonable argument, given the children's struggles, that they could not fully participate in the classroom due to the barriers they were presented with. Lily provided a telling insight into how her struggles culminated: "I kind of just sat around in the classroom and didn't really do much". She did not see herself as learning, and her explanation for this was based on the struggles she faced focusing and avoiding distractions. Similarly, this idea of not learning in the classroom was described by other children and parent participants. These children were not always able to follow what was happening in the classroom. They were too focused on the distractions around them, and they were unengaged from having to sit and listen for extended periods. Prosser's (2008) argument that classroom structures are ill-equipped for children with ADHD resonated with what the children in the current research reported; because the structure of the classroom did not work for them, they were not able to fully participate.

Given these children's struggles and the argument that some of the children were not fully participating in the classroom, it is noteworthy that none of the children or parents identified anything specifically in place to help them cope with the classroom requirements. The

children needed support to help them with distractions in the classroom, and some needed support with their learning. Owen's mother, Betty, reinforced that her child needed support in the traditional classroom environment: "The normal way of learning just doesn't work for him". This negative narrative of a school environment not working for the children is important. The structure of the classroom did not work for the children, and they were not able to thrive in the classroom because of it. The children's voices provide insight into the reality that many children with ADHD in New Zealand likely face at school; that insight is one of struggling to adapt to classroom environments that are not suited to them.

There are, however, evidence-based methods to assist children with ADHD in the classroom (Harrison et al., 2019). Such evidence-based strategies include sitting children with ADHD away from large groups of other children, making sure children with ADHD are as close to the teacher as possible, having active times in the day and using visual reminders, such as sand timers, for tasks. Although none of the children or parents mentioned such adaptions in their classrooms, it is possible that some of them were used by the teachers (Harrison et al., 2019). Either way, given that all the children struggled with the classroom environment, it is important for teachers to adapt the classroom environment to help children with ADHD to thrive in the classroom environment.

The other narrative of school that emerged from the children's and parents' interviews was a positive narrative of school. This positive narrative involved teachers using children's interests at school, being in the outdoors and the perceptions of children and parents that teacher relationships were positive. Using interests at school was seen as important for both the children and parents. Using interests to engage children with ADHD at school is particularly important because children with ADHD are more disengaged in school in general and respond well to their

interests being used (Smith et al., 2019). The children in this study looked forward to the use of their interests at school.

What was probably the most significant aspect for the children concerning the use of their interests was that it allowed them to engage in something they were good at. There was genuine excitement in the interviews when the children talked about their interests and a sense that they knew their interests were activities that they succeeded at and, therefore, relished the opportunity to engage in them. This was most apparent in Wilson's interview. Wilson spoke of waiting each week for Friday when he would be able to research his interests through various projects. This was the highlight of school for him. Similarly, Lily relished being able to research horses at school. This led her to see herself as a capable learner. The way children spoke of being engaged and focused when working on their interests suggests that this is a way to effectively engage children with ADHD at school. Parents, too, believed that using their child's interest at school was a great strategy for engaging them at school.

In addition to children wanting their interests to be used at school, all the children desired to be outside while learning. Being outside for their learning must be separated from being outside during playtimes, which, as discussed, was not always a positive experience. The children described the outdoors as entailing going on trips, playing whole-class games and learning outdoors. For these children, it can be assumed that the benefits of being outside were likely twofold. Firstly, it was a break from the classroom environment, which was described as being boring. This gave the children a sense of freedom that could not be experienced in the indoor classroom environment. Secondly, being outdoors, playing whole-class games and going on trips were described as active and fun, both of which were important in the children's school experiences. Utilising outdoor learning and providing opportunities to be active are suggested to

positively affect school engagement for children with ADHD (Kuo & Taylor, 2004, 2008). This suggests that outdoor learning would have been beneficial for these children.

Positive teacher relationships were also part of the positive school narrative. All the children described their relationship with their teacher to be both positive and an important part of their school experience. It is significant that the children perceived their relationships with their current teachers as positive. As discussed in the literature review, research has suggested that it is common for children with ADHD to have negative relationships with their teachers (Padilla-Petry et al., 2018; Prosser, 2008; Kendall, 2016; Shatell et al., 2008). In the current study, children and parents perceived that teachers understood the children's interests at school and made efforts to incorporate them into schoolwork to varying degrees. All the children made explicit comments that their teacher did not shout at them. This was clearly important to all the children, and it is an indication that they had experienced shouting. Teachers' actions impact children's experiences of school. This is widely accepted (Hattie, 2008). The comments about teachers being nice, not shouting and taking a genuine interest in the children were significant for the children in this research. These actions by the children's teachers were likely the reasons for which teacher relationships were all viewed positively.

Parents also indicated that teachers were a highlight of their child's schooling experiences. Some teachers' actions were noticed by these parents. For example, Claire commented that Frank's teacher regularly communicated about how Frank's day had been, and Francis said that Lily's current teacher would make a social story for big events and then share them with the class. Even if their child's school did not provide specific supports for their children, these parents were grateful that their child's teacher cared and that they understood the importance of having a strong relationship with their child. Previous research has suggested that

parent–teacher relationships can often be strained for parents of children with ADHD (Carpenter & Austin, 2008; Gwernan-Jones et al., 2015; Rushton et al., 2019). The parents who participated in the current research felt that both their relationship and their child's relationship with their teacher was positive. It is an important takeaway that teacher's actions mattered. Although the classroom environment was difficult and, at times, boring, the relationships these children had with their teachers was a key positive feature of school for both children and parents.

The significance of understanding how children wanted school to be is that schools can learn how to engage children with ADHD and improve their experiences of school. Although the children provide descriptions of a predominantly-negative classroom environment, there was valuable insight into how school could be better adapted to their needs. Prosser (2008) argued that school and class environments are not structured for children with ADHD. However, the children in the current research provided an alternative narrative of how school could be an engaging place where their interests are used, the outdoors is a part of their learning and their teachers respect them. Given that the four children's accounts of what they wanted their school experience to be like were very similar, it may also be the case that what these children found positive at school may similarly be what other children with ADHD in primary schools in New Zealand find positive.

Ineffective support at School

The descriptions that parents, and to a lesser extent their children, gave of the support received at school suggested that the support these children received at school was ineffective. There was a shared understanding among the parents that ADHD was misunderstood as a disorder at the school. There were also descriptions of the tensions that labelling their child with ADHD involved, and the IEP process was significantly criticised. For parents, the lack of support for their children led to them being advocates for their children. However, both parents and children also gave positive descriptions of teachers who cared and wanted to help the children. The similarities in the findings regarding ineffective support at school suggest that this ineffective support for children with ADHD in primary schools may be a broader problem in New Zealand.

Some of the children described the inadequate support that they received at school. Some of the children described struggling with classwork and explained that there was often no help available to them. For both Lily and Owen, this amounted to them perceiving that they were not learning at school. Children with ADHD are more likely to fall behind with schoolwork and feel disengaged at school due to a lack of assistance than their typically-developing peers (Shatell et al., 2008). All these children struggled at school, both socially during playtimes and while following the requirements of the classroom. However, they were all directly asked what help they received at playtime or in the classroom. None of the children could identify any support in place to help them. The fact that Lily and Owen wanted help to learn is significant. They both knew they faced challenges and saw themselves as needing help to overcome those challenges.

Parents, provided detailed descriptions of the inadequate support their children received at school. One example of inadequate support that the children received at school was the

misunderstanding of ADHD parents perceived was shown by their children's schools and teachers. It was apparent how much the parents understood about ADHD as a disorder; they recognised the disorder's symptoms and knew how to best support their child. There was a shared perception among the parents that if their child's school understood more about ADHD, then this would benefit their child's school experience because schools would potentially be able to help with the issues their children faced at school. This issue of schools' misunderstanding ADHD and parents wanting schools to better understand the disorder to better support their children was reflected in the literature review (Harborne et al., 2004; Gwernan-Jones et al., 2015; Carpenter & Austin, 2008; Moore et al., 2017). Furthermore, in the New Zealand context, the lack of understanding of ADHD among teachers has been highlighted in research by Curtis et al. (2014), who found that teachers in New Zealand do not have access to training specifically on ADHD and that they have key misconceptions of the disorder. However, the findings of the current research reveal what parents themselves did to try to increase the understanding of the ADHD within their children's schools.

The most common way parents described trying to build an understanding of ADHD with their child's teacher and school was having their child formally diagnosed with ADHD, which allowed them to use the label of their child having ADHD. Three of the four parents shared a common understanding of the value of the label which was that having a label of ADHD could build an awareness within their child's school and among teachers of what ADHD is, and make schools aware of the difficulties their children faced at school which would potentially translate to improved support for their child. However, labelling was also identified in the findings as being a point of tension. As discussed in the literature review, it is widely accepted that labelling children with special educational needs is a controversial issue in education (Graham, 2012;

DosReis et al., 2010). The tension was that there was an acknowledged stigma that came with a label of ADHD; for example, Jack and Emma thought that a label of ADHD caused negative stigma. They felt that Wilson was negatively stigmatised in a social capacity because of his ADHD. As discussed previously, other parents did not want their children to associate with him.

The literature review discussed that some parents of children diagnosed with ADHD found that stigma associated with their children receiving the label may be offset by certain unexpected benefits (Dosreis et al., 2010; Ohan et al., 2013). Parents who participated in the present study , also described that benefits of a diagnosis included potentially building greater understanding of ADHD amongst their children's teachers and facilitating greater access to learning support for their children at school, such as being eligible for IEPs. It was not that these parents necessarily wanted to advertise that their child had ADHD, as reflected by Jack and Emma's position, but that they were dissatisfied with the level of support given to their children at school and the lack of understanding shown by teachers and schools regarding ADHD. Parents who participated in this study expressed that having their children receive a diagnosis of ADHD was a necessary and pragmatic way of helping their children.

The broader argument of the tensions surrounding the labelling of children is presented by Graham (2012), who argued that labelling children with special educational needs amounts to creating achievement limits and diminished expectations. Graham (2012) argued that labels should be replaced with inclusive views of children that emphasises each child's uniqueness. Although such an approach may appear appealing, parents in the current research expressed that they would exhaust all options available to them if doing so would help their children at school. Labels can support both children and parents by enabling access to special education professionals who have the necessary expertise and understanding of the difficulties they face

and can also be essential in helping to secure other kinds of learning support at schools (Boyle & Lauchlan, 2007). While Boyle and Lauchlan (2007) opposed over-reliance on labels, they presented an argument that resonated with the current study's parent participants. Boyle and Lauchlan (2007) argued that labels should be the choice of families rather than schools because families may understand a label as providing them with the opportunity for greater support and understanding. However, parents described, in reality, the only real support granted by schools was IEPs.

Most of the children had been given an IEP, except for Wilson. Wilson's parents wanted him to also be given an IEP. Parents described three issues with the IEP: firstly it was perceived as a mere formality; secondly goals were often not met; and thirdly the IEP process was not altogether trustworthy. Parents of children who had been given IEPs perceived the IEPs as having minimal impact on helping their children's overall learning. It is concerning that all the parents described the process as a "quick meeting". It has been argued that in New Zealand, teachers often view the IEP as more of an administrative task than a tool to develop effective outcomes for students (Mitchell et al., 2010). The process the parents in the current study describe supports this and suggests that the schools viewed the IEP in this way. Parents did see some value in the IEP as a way to more clearly identify what their children were doing at school and what their children had been observed to be struggling with however they did not see it as a way for their children's school experiences to be significantly improved overall.

Parents reported that goals in the IEP were often either not met or unrealistic and where they were not achieved that they were simply revisited and repeated in the following year. It was previously found that IEPs in New Zealand can have unrealistic goals, usually due to stakeholders not thinking of linkages to the actual provisions available in schools (Hamilton &

Vermeren, 2016; Wylie, 2000). In the present study, if goals were not being met on the IEP, and were just simply repeated, it is not surprising that parents would not take the goals seriously. These goals could be arguably be described as aspirational goals rather than well-thought-out achievable ones that could realistically be met.

The issues that parents described with the IEP process led to a mistrust of the IEP process altogether. The level of mistrust of the IEP was enough for these parents to disregard the IEP process altogether. For Claire, the mistrust of the IEP process was such an issue that she took control of the process. She used her own goals for the IEP process because she saw the school's understanding of what Frank needed to be inadequate. She felt so strongly about the school's inability to meet the IEP goals that Frank's specialist tutor was instructed to work on the IEP goals that Claire set. In other words, she was directing the process, rather than the school doing so. Parents lack of trust in the IEP process is a significant finding. The IEP is supposed to be a document and process that improves school experiences for the children but the findings of this research suggests this is not always the case.

The IEP process in New Zealand is designed to be thorough (Hornby, 2014). The Ministry of Education in New Zealand has extensive guidelines for creating IEPs for students with special educational needs. The guidelines state that an IEP is a living document that sets realistic goals and is a regularly updated document with insights from the student and those who know the student best (Ministry of Education, 2011). However, understanding of IEP procedures and of the document itself vary considerably because the process is optional for schools (Hornby, 2014).It is concerning that such shortcomings of the IEP were common across the parents' experiences, and this raises the question as to whether such experiences may be occurring on a wider scale in the New Zealand context. This is an area in which further research is warranted.

Given that the IEP was the only reported support available for the children in this study, it is significant that the IEP was viewed as inadequate. Furthermore, getting the IEP itself and trying to get any other help for their children at school was described as an uphill battle by parents. This battle was evident in Wilson not having an IEP. His parents described that his school would only give IEPs to children with academic impairment. However, Wilson's parents believed he struggled so much socially at school that he needed an IEP. It is interesting that Wilson was not able to have an IEP, as it would suggest that the focus of the IEP at his school was solely for academic intervention, rather than helping with social, emotional and behavioural struggles. Questions about the decision-making process of who is entitled to an IEP and what purpose the IEP actually serves, academic, social or as a holistic support, can be raised from these findings. Claire described the process of gaining support as a "hustle". Claire also shared that her job as a mother was to be an "advocate" for Frank until he was old enough to do so himself. The term "advocate" reflects how all these parents understood their role in their children's education. However, these parents cannot be described as merely advocating for their children; they went well beyond this—they were actively intervening in their children's education.

The extent to which these parents intervened and advocated for their children was substantial. It was far above what would be expected of any parent in a New Zealand school setting. Mitchell et al. (2010) identified that parental involvement for children with special educational needs is important because it helps the children to thrive at school, but the degree to which the parents in the current research involved themselves extended to actually providing educational services for their children's school and paying for specialists. Emma made a substantial commitment to pay for a child psychologist to facilitate multiple whole-school-

faculty professional development sessions about ADHD in an attempt to build an understanding of the disorder. At Lily's former school, Francis spent hours each week going to the school, providing resources and talking to teachers to help them build an understanding of the disorder and introduce practical strategies for a progressive schooling experience for Lily. Claire intervened directly, employing a specialised tutor to work with Frank at school twice weekly. She did not trust the school's ability to help Frank.

The fact that these parents all had to advocate for their children at school is a strong indication that they did not see their children as part of truly inclusive school communities. They had to push for understanding and any form of support, which is not a sign of an inclusive school community. Furthermore, it is concerning that parents felt they had to take drastic steps. These parents' actions strongly suggest that the children in this research were not sufficiently supported at school.

As discussed in the literature review, there is support available for children with ADHD and other disabilities in the context of New Zealand. This support is designed to ensure that every school in New Zealand can provide an inclusive school experience and educational outcomes for all children (Powell, 2012). Given that there is support available for children with ADHD in New Zealand, it is surprising that none of the parents had knowledge of supports such as the RTLB service. The parents were explicitly asked if they were aware of any support their children received, yet no specific support other than the IEP was mentioned. Concerning why the RTLB service was not mentioned as a type of support that any of these children received, the following questions can be raised from this common finding and would be worthwhile avenues for future research: What children have access to the RTLB service, and what happens to children who are struggling at school but do not meet the criteria to be referred to the RTLB

service It is concerning that the parents were either unaware the support available or that these children were not eligible for support and left to struggle without assistance. This issue of what supports are actually available for children with ADHD and who gets access to them is a significant question that this discussion has raised. The reported experiences of the parents in this study with respect to accessing support for their children resonates with McIntyre and Hennessy's (2012) findings that parents of children with ADHD often feel that gaining support for their child is stressful, confusing, and incredibly difficult and that any support that is received is inadequate and leaves them dissatisfied.

Although the parents were dissatisfied with the inadequate support their children received at school, the children's and parent's relationships with class teachers were very positive. Recent literature reveals that one of the main barriers to providing interventions and effective support for children with ADHD is children's negative relationships with their teachers (Gibbs et al., 2016; Kendall, 2016; Rushton et al., 2019). The children's teachers in the current research were in the best position to provide interventions for these children. They had strong relationships with the children, which has been shown to be important for children with ADHD (Gibbs et al., 2016; Kendall, 2016; Rushton et al., 2019). It is interesting that for all the parents and children in the current research, teacher relationships were understood to be positive. As discussed in the literature review, children with ADHD often have negative relationships with their teachers (Gibbs et al., 2016; Kendall, 2016; Rushton et al., 2019). It would be an interesting avenue of further research to examine whether positive teacher–student relationships are occurring for children with ADHD on a wider scale in New Zealand. If such positive relationships are occurring on a wider scale it would suggest that New Zealand primary school teachers are explicitly taking actions to foster positive relationships with children with ADHD. In this study,

parents were not found to be dissatisfied with teachers. They were, arguably, dissatisfied with the professional development available to these teachers and the resources, such as teacher aides, RTLB support and interventions, that these teachers had available to them. Therefore, it can be argued that how support was rolled out in the schools the participating children attended was the issue and that teachers were a positive part of school for parents and children.

Although teacher relationships were a positive aspect of school for the children and parents in the current study, the actual structure of support in the schools these children attended was ineffective. However, from the children's and parent's descriptions of areas in which the children struggled at school, there are some simple supports that the schools could have quite easily made available. All the children described frequent peer rejection occurring during playtimes and a lack of support available to them during this time, which was reiterated by the parents in their descriptions. However, no support at playtimes existed for any of these children. Gibbs et al. (2016) conducted a case study of six parents who each had a child with ADHD and found that the parents desired social support for their children at school. Such initiatives could have been the use of a buddy bench system (Griffin et al., 2017), which may have resulted in fewer of the children in the current study feeling alone during playtimes. As previously discussed, another way to support children with ADHD is through the use of structured games and activities (Mrug et al., 2012), which would have given the children in the current study additional opportunities to be included with their peers during playtimes. This type of simple support would most likely have made a difference in the children's experiences of playtimes.

The parents in this research had a shared understanding that there was a need to advocate for support available for their children at school. This need arose due to a lack of understanding of ADHD shown by the children's schools and a general lack of support available for their

children at school. There are also questions that arise from this research related to the support available for children with ADHD. The questions raised in this research are around the purpose of the IEP document and why the children in the current research had so little support available to them when schools do have access to support for children with ADHD in New Zealand.

Limitations of the Present Study

The scope of this small scale phenomenological master's level research was to explore the school experiences of four children diagnosed with ADHD in New Zealand and their parents' perception of their child's school experience. The participants in the research were a relatively homogeneous group, the parent's and children's ethnicity was mostly identified as Caucasian, and all the schools the children attended were urban schools; due to the small and homogenous group of participants, the findings cannot be generalised. Any qualitative researcher who chooses to conduct a research study must recognise that the data obtained from a subject pool may not necessarily represent a broader spectrum (Creswell, 2009). Furthermore, the research relied on interviews from a group of parents who could attend and were aware of monthly sessions of the ADHD Matters group, which is a limitation of the study, as it meant that the schools the children attended were close together due to the location of the ADHD Matters group. However, this phenomenological study has allowed for a valuable exploration of how a group of children with ADHD in New Zealand experience primary school within these limitations.

Suggestions for future Research

Three key areas for further research have emerged from this study. Firstly, there is a need for a more detailed examination of the experiences children with ADHD have during playtimes given the difficulties the children experienced at playtimes and the potential that such experiences are more widespread in New Zealand schools. Secondly, more research is needed that examines the provision of support for children with ADHD in New Zealand primary schools. All the parents described the limited of support available for their children and the inadequacy of what was available. Given that New Zealand promotes itself as having an inclusive education system, this is an important area of further research. Finally, parents

perceived the IEP process as not being adequate or trusted. It would be useful to conduct a larger study to examine whether this an issue that is widespread in New Zealand primary schools for children with ADHD and others that have IEPs.

Conclusion

The purpose of the current research was to examine the school experiences of four children with ADHD in New Zealand. Currently, there is no research in New Zealand that has investigated the school experiences of children with ADHD or their parents' perspectives. This research has generated new knowledge in the context of New Zealand.

An important feature of this research is that it has captured both the child participant's voice and the parents' voice, which gives an insight into the issues surrounding the school experience of children with ADHD. It has been argued that listening to and acting on the voice of children is an important step toward creating more inclusive school communities (Messiou, 2002; Kellett, 2010; Bourke & MacDonald, 2018; Slee, 2001). The children and parents in the current research discussed the barriers to inclusion that existed for them at school. Such barriers included: peer rejection, loneliness, the classroom environment being difficult, and inadequate support. These findings would all be of value to educators who aim to increase the inclusion of children with ADHD in New Zealand's primary schools. The findings of persistent peer rejection at playtimes, experiences of exclusion at school, and difficulties experienced in the classroom were reflected in both child and parent interviews. These children were not always able to participate fully in their school's social and academic life; they were faced with exclusion. The fact that these findings were reflected in all the interviews with children from four different schools who had no interaction with one another is significant in the sense that it suggests that these experiences could be occurring more commonly in schools in New Zealand.

This research has been a great learning experience for me. My knowledge and understanding of ADHD as a disorder and my understanding of the complexities of the school experience for children with ADHD have expanded. Things seem to have improved from my own experiences of being a child with ADHD in New Zealand's schooling system. Teachers in this research were described as caring and as genuinely trying to assist the children. There were positive parts of school, such as the children being able to use their interests at school and the integration of the outdoors in their learning. However, these children were still not fully included at school; they had experiences of exclusion. This research identified that there is still work to be done in order to create wholly inclusive school communities for children with ADHD. The children's insights in this research were candid—they were real, and they were valuable insights I am grateful to have been able to hear. Listening to the insights of children's own experiences may be a useful direction to explore in terms of finding ways of making schools better for children with ADHD.

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Appendix A- Initial email

Kia ora,

My name is Andrew McKegg, you are being emailed in regard to an opportunity to take part in a study on parent and child perceptions of schooling (children must have an ADHD diagnosis).

To complete this study, I am looking for children and parents (or caregivers) to express interest in taking part in two interviews (around 25-45 minutes each). This initial email is to gauge interest from parents in the group ADHD Matters, which is also how your email has been sourced.

There is no obligation or pressure to take part in this study. I ask If you are interested in the study please follow the instructions set out below, if not, please do not respond to this email.

If you are interested:

1. Please email andrew.mckegg@pg.canterbury.ac.nz, stating your name and that you are interested in the study
2. I will email you back (within five working days) to arrange a phone call at a mutually agreed time.
3. If, after the phone call, you want to participate in the study I will send the information and consent forms to you.

Thank you, Andrew McKegg

Appendix B-Consent forms

Consent form, age (8-10).

The project Andrew wants to do is about how you find school and what you think about school.

-You do not need to take part in this project if you do not want to.
-If you want to do want to take part in the project you will need to come to a short interview with Andy.
-If you decide later on you do not want to be part of the project you can just tell Andrew or your parents and that will be fine. No-one will mind.

I am happy to be part of project. I am happy to do an interview with Andrew. So I have circled the happy face.

OR.

I do not want to be part of the project, so I have circled the sad face.

My name:

Please make sure this goes back to your parent(s).

College of Education, Health and Human Development
Telephone +64 [0224112730] Email:
[Andrew.mckegg@pg.canterbury.ac.nz]
ERHEC Ref: [2019/67/ERHEC]

UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY
Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha
CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

[Children with ADHD and their parent's perceptions of schooling experience]

Consent Form for [Parent(s) or Caregiver(s)]

- ☐ I have been given a full explanation of this project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- ☐ I understand what is required of me if I agree to take part in the research.
- ☐ I understand that by signing this consent form.
- ☐ I understand that the researcher will email me to arrange interview times for myself and my child.
- ☐ I understand my interview will be audio recorded.
- ☐ I understand that participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without penalty. Withdrawal of participation will also include the withdrawal of any information I have provided should this remain practically achievable.
- ☐ I understand that any information or opinions I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and the researcher's two supervisors. Any published or reported results will not identify the participants. I understand that a thesis is a public document and will be available through the UC Library.
- ☐ I understand that when the transcript of the interviews has been written I will have the opportunity to review and amend this.
- ☐ I understand that all data collected for the study will be kept in locked and secure facilities and/or in password protected electronic form and will be destroyed after five years.
- ☐ I understand the risks associated with taking part and how they will be managed.
- ☐ I understand that I can contact the researcher [Andrew McKegg, andrew.mckegg@pg.canterbury.ac.nz ,0224112730] or the research supervisor [*Dr Trish McMenamin-trish.mcmenamin@canterbury.ac.nz*] for further information. If I have any complaints, I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz).
- ☐ I would like a summary of the results of the project.
- ☐ By signing below, I agree to participate in this research project.

Name:_____ Signed:_____ Date:_____

Email address:

Please return consent form to: 12 Glenmore Street, Thornden, Wellington, 6011.

Or, scan to: andrew.mckegg@pg.canterbury.ac.nz.

College of Education, Health and Human Development
Telephone +64 [0224112730] Email:
[Andrew.mckegg@pg.canterbury.ac.nz]
ERHEC Ref: [2019/67/ERHEC]

UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY
Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha
CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

[Children with ADHD and their parent's perceptions of schooling experience]
Consent Form for [Parental consent]

- ☐ I have been given a full explanation of this project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- ☐ I understand my child's interview will be audio recorded.
- ☐ I understand what is required of my child if I agree for her/him to take part in the research.
- ☐ I understand that participation is voluntary, and I may withdraw my child at any time without penalty. Withdrawal of participation will also include the withdrawal of any information I have provided should this remain practically achievable.
- ☐ I understand that any information or opinions I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and the researcher's two supervisors. Any published or reported results will not identify the participants. I understand that a thesis is a public document and will be available through the UC Library.
- ☐ I understand that by signing this consent form the researcher will email me to arrange interview times for myself and my child.
- ☐ I understand that when the transcript of the interviews has been written about my child and I will have the opportunity to review and amend this.
- ☐ I understand that all data collected for the study will be kept in locked and secure facilities and/or in password protected electronic form and will be destroyed after five years.
- ☐ I understand the risks associated with taking part and how they will be managed.
- ☐ I understand that I can contact the researcher [Andrew McKegg, andrew.mckegg@pg.canterbury.ac.nz ,0224112730] or the research supervisor [*Dr Trish McMenamin-trish.mcmenamin@canterbury.ac.nz*] for further information. If I have any complaints, I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz).
- ☐ I understand that by signing this form I am giving parental consent for my child to take part in this research.
- ☐ I would like a summary of the results of the project.
- ☐ By signing below, I agree for my child to participate in this research project.

I give my Child (name):_____consent to take part in this research

Name of parent:_____Signed:_____Date:_____

Email address:

Please return consent form to: 12 Glenmore Street, Thornden, Wellington, 6011.

Or, scan to: andrew.mckegg@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

College of Education, Health and Human Development
Telephone: +64 [0224112730] Email:
[andrew.mckegg@pg.canterbury.ac.nz]
ERHEC Ref: [2019/67/ERHEC]

UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY
Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha
CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

[Children with ADHD and their parent's perceptions of schooling experience]

Consent Form for [children aged 11-13]

- ☐ I know what this project is about and I have been able to ask questions.
- ☐ I understand what I need to do to be part of this research.
- ☐ I understand that it is my choice to take part in the research. If I decide to not take part in the study after the interviews the researcher will try, as far as possible, to not include my information in the study.
- ☐ I understand that by signing this consent form the researcher will email my parents to arrange an interview time.
- ☐ I understand my interview will be voice recorded.
- ☐ I understand that after the interview the researcher will write up what I've said and he will give me a copy of this. I know I will be able to change what I've said.
- ☐ I understand that any information or opinions I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and the researcher's two supervisors. Any published or reported results will not identify me. I understand that this research is going to be able to be viewed by other people.
- ☐ I understand that all the interview information collected for the study will be kept locked and safe. I know that the information will be destroyed after five years.
- ☐ I have been told about the risks that come with taking part and how they will be managed.
- ☐ I understand that I can contact the researcher [Andrew McKegg-andrew.mckegg@pg.canterbury.ac.nz , 0224112730] or the research supervisor [*Dr Trish McMenamin-trish.mcmenamin@canterbury.ac.nz*] for further information. If I have any complaints, I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz)
- ☐ I would like a summary of the results of the project.
- ☐ By signing below, I agree to participate in this research project.

Name:_____ Signed:_____ Date:_____

Email address:_____

Please return consent form to your parent or caregiver, who will then on send the consent form to 12a Glenmore Street, Thorden, Wellington, Or, scan to: andrew.mckegg@pg.canterbury.ac.nz.

Andrew McKegg

Appendix C-Child information sheets

College of Education, Health and Human Development
Telephone: +64 [0224112730] Email: [andrew.mckegg@pg.canterbury.ac.nz]
[Date]
ERHEC Ref: [2019/67/ERHEC]

Information Sheet for research participants (Children, aged 11-13)

Hello,
My name is Andrew McKegg and I want to do a study on what children, like yourself, think about school.

I am wanting to talk to you because your Mum, Dad or Caregiver came to a support group about Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder or (ADHD). I want to look into what school is like for children with ADHD and I want to also know what parents think about your school experience. I am doing this research so I can gain my Masters of Education Degree from the University of Canterbury. I have two supervisors (teachers) who will be helping me with the research, you won't meet them though as I'm going to be the one doing the research.

There will be three other children and three other parent(s) or caregiver(s) taking part in this study, to make sure their information is kept private you will not meet them, or know who they are. The information I get from you about your school experience will help to make something called a narrative, which is like a story about school experiences. This will also help make sure people can't tell that you took part in this research. The information I get from you will be kept for five years, and then it will be destroyed. This is the University of Canterbury rule about collecting information.

To look into your school experience, I need to do two things.

1.

I will need to do an interview with you. This will be a 20 to 30-minute talk. This interview will be voice recorded and the interview will take place at your house. Your Mum, Dad, Caregiver, or someone you want to support you can be in the interview with you. You can stop the interview if you start to feel uncomfortable with anything. You can also choose to stop the interview and to not be part of the research anymore. Your Mum, Dad or Caregiver will also be interviewed but on a separate day than you. After the interview you will have the opportunity to talk to me about anything you're worried about. When I'm finished writing up what you said I will share the information about the interview with you and you can let me know if you think I have got anything wrong that you want to be changed. Your parents will also receive a copy of what you've said when I've written down what you said, you will be able to change your answers if you are not happy with them.

2.

Andrew McKegg

I will need to write up some findings from your interview and from the other interviews I'm doing. When I do this, I will change your name, not talk about the name of your school, or special things about your school that might tell people what school it is. I also won't say where you live. This is to make sure no one can tell I'm writing about you.

The recording of your interview will be kept safe on a password protected hard drive, no one will be able to see that information, except me and my two research supervisors.

When I'm done I will share the information about the interview with you.

Taking part in these interviews and this research is completely your choice. You do not have to do it. If you do not want to take part you just need to tell your mum, dad or caregiver you do not want to take part and that's fine. If you decide to take part and then change your mind that is okay too. Just tell you mum, dad or caregiver and they will tell me.

If you would like to take part in this research you need to sign the consent form and give this to you parent(s) or caregiver(s). They will then send the form back to me and I will then make contact to arrange an interview time that works for you.

Thanks, Andrew McKegg.

College of Education, Health and Human Development
Telephone: +64 [0224112730] Email: [andrew.mckegg@pg.canterbury.ac.nz]
[Date]
ERHEC Ref: [2019/67/ERHEC]

UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY
Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha
CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

Information Sheet for research participants (Children, aged 8-10)

Hello,
My name is Andrew McKegg and I want to invite you to talk to me about what you think about going to school.

I am wanting to talk to you because your Mum, Dad or Caregiver came to a support group about Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder or (ADHD). I want to look into what school is like for children with ADHD and I want to also know what parents think about your school experience.

To look into your school experience, I need to do two things.

1.

I will need to do an interview with you. This will be a 20 to 30-minute talk. This interview will be voice recorded and the interview will take place at your house. You can stop the interview if you start to feel a bit funny. You can also choose to stop the interview and to not be part of the research anymore. Your Mum, Dad, Caregiver, or someone you want to support you can be in the interview with you. Your Mum, Dad and/or Caregiver will also be interviewed but on a different day. After the interview I will have a talk with you about anything you're worried about.

2.

I will need to write up what you said in your interview. When I do this I will change your name, not talk about the name of your school, or special things about your school that might tell people what school it is, I also won't be say where you live. This is to make sure no one can tell I'm writing about you. When I'm finished writing up what you said I will share the information about the interview with you. You will be able to let me know if you think I have got anything wrong that you want to be changed. Your parents will also receive a copy of what you've said.

Taking part in these interviews and this research is completely your choice. You do not have to do it. If you do not want to take part you just need to tell your mum, dad, or caregiver you do not want to take part and that's fine.

If you would like to take part in this research you need to sign the consent form and return this to you parent(s) or caregiver(s), they will then send this back to me and we will arrange an interview time that works for you.

Thanks, Andrew McKegg.

Andrew McKegg

Appendix D-Parent information sheet

College of Education, Health and Human Development
Telephone: +64 [0224112730] Email: [andrew.mckegg@pg.canterbury.ac.nz]
[Date]
ERHEC Ref: [2019/67/ERHEC]

Information Sheet for research participants-parent(s) and caregiver(s)

Children with ADHD and their parent's perceptions of schooling experience

Kia ora, my name is Andrew McKegg. I am undertaking a Master's level thesis in Education at the University of Canterbury. I am also a Learning Specialist at The Yew Chung International School in Hong Kong, and a fully Registered New Zealand Teacher. I have worked as a teacher, school leader in New Zealand, special education teacher, and a teacher of children with emotional and behavioural needs in London. I have experience working with children with ADHD. However, this will be the first supervised research I have undertaken.

The purpose of my research is to better understand the perspectives of children diagnosed with ADHD and their parent(s)/caregiver(s) in regards to their schooling experiences. The research will be a multiple case study of four children and their respective parents. It will examine the perspectives of children and their parent(s)/caregiver(s) separately. It will seek to find out how children and parent(s)/caregiver(s) feel toward schooling based on their personal experiences.

I am approaching you to take part in this study as you participated in the parent support and education group, ADHD Matters which I coordinated. This group has now disbanded. However, I want to assure you that if you choose not to participate, or decide to withdraw from the study, this will in no way affect our ongoing relationship. There is no assumption of your participation in this study. To be eligible to participate in the study, you need to have a child with a medical diagnosis of ADHD. Who is also within the age range of 8-13, and attends either a state or private New Zealand Primary school.

If you choose to take part in this study, your involvement in this project will consist of one interview for yourself (and partner/significant carer for the child if possible). Your child's participation will also consist of one interview, but this will be at a separate time from the parent/significant carer interview. The interviews will be relaxed and semi-structured, which means that although particular topics will be covered, you and your child will direct the conversation. The data will be recorded through the use of a tape recorder, no video recording will take place. The length of the interviews will range from approximately 25-45 minutes each, for both adult and child or young person. The interviews will take place at a time that suits you and your child, and will take place in your home. During the child and young person interviews, parents or caregivers will be able to be present. However, they will be asked not to answer questions for the child or young person. The topics for the child and young person interviews will be the same as the interviews for parent(s)/caregiver(s). Both the parent(s)/caregiver(s) and children interviews will be followed up with a short conversation. This conversation will be centred around any concerns that participants may have immediately after the interview.

Information from the parent/caregiver interview will be collated to form a narrative, which means that individuals will not be the focus of the study. I intend to find patterns in the data and create a group story around what children and parents report. The interviews will be based on school experiences. Recounting these experiences may bring up uncomfortable or unhappy memories and emotions. To mitigate the risk of making yourself or your child uncomfortable with the interview questions, you and your child will have many opportunities to terminate the interview. At any time during the interviews, you can ask for the interview to be paused to take a break, or you can choose

to skip a question. Furthermore, two weeks before the interview, the topics that will be discussed will be shared with you. You will have the opportunity to discuss these topics with me and discuss if there are any topics that either parents, children or young people do not want to discuss. It would be helpful for parents to explain these interview topics to the children or young person(s) so that any concerns they have can be communicated with me.

If the interviews do upset you or your child, these two counselling services are free to use and can provide phone support.

Skylight – 0800 299 100-For adults experiencing grief/trauma.

Kidsline – 0800 54 37 54 for young people up to 18 years of age.

After all the interviews with the study participants have been completed, they will be transcribed. I will email you a copy of the transcription of your and your child's interview for checking, if required, I can edit this transcription.

The results of the project may be published, but you may be assured of the complete confidentiality of any data gathered in this investigation. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality pseudonyms (fictional names) will be used for all participants in the research. The location of the study and the name(s) of any schools will not be mentioned. Only I and my two supervisors will be privy to this data. Data will be kept on a password-protected encrypted hard drive, which only I have access to and will be stored securely for a total of 5 years, after which it will be destroyed. A thesis is a public document and will be available to view through the UC Library.

Participation is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. You may ask for your raw data to be returned to you or destroyed at any point. If you withdraw, I will remove all information relating to you. However, once the analysis of raw data starts on [insert date at which withdrawal of data], it will become increasingly difficult to remove because of the influence your data has on the results. You also have the right to withdraw your child's data from the study.

As this research will involve both yourself and your child, if you wish to take part, you need to complete the parental consent form, and your child needs to complete their own consent form. There is a consent form for children (ages 8-10) and for young people (ages 11-13). If you wish to receive a copy of the summary of the results of the project, please indicate this to me on the consent form.

The project is being carried out as a requirement for the degree of Master of Education by Andrew James McKegg under the supervision of Trish McMenamin who can be contacted at [trish.mcmenamin@canterbury.ac.nz]. She will be pleased to discuss any concerns you may have about participation in the project. This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, and participants should address any complaints to The Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz).

If you agree to participate in the study, you are asked to complete the consent form and return to either 12 Glenmore Street, Wellington, 6011 OR scan and email to andrew.mckegg@pg.canterbury.ac.nz. I will then contact you via email to arrange a mutually agreeable meeting time.

Thank you for considering taking part in this research.

Andrew McKegg

Appendix E-Ethics approval

HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE

Secretary, Rebecca Robinson
Telephone: +64 03 369 4588, Extn 94588
Email: human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz

Ref: 2019/67/ERHEC

6 November 2019

Andrew McKegg
College of Education, Health and Human Development
UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY

Dear Andrew

Thank you for providing the revised documents in support of your application to the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee. I am very pleased to inform you that your research proposal **"**Children with ADHD and Their Parent's Perceptions of Schooling Experience" has been granted ethical approval.

Please note that this approval is subject to the incorporation of the amendments you have provided in your emails of 23rd and 31st October, and 5th November 2019.

Should circumstances relevant to this current application change you are required to reapply for ethical approval.

If you have any questions regarding this approval, please let me know.

We wish you well for your research.

Yours sincerely

pp. R. Robinson

Dr Patrick Shepherd
Chair
Educational Research Human Ethics Committee

Please note that ethical approval relates only to the ethical elements of the relationship between the researcher, research participants and other stakeholders. The granting of approval by the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee should not be interpreted as comment on the methodology, legality, value or any other matters relating to this research.

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